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The Times Literary Supplement

October 30-November 5 1987 Priority House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

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- Cover Picture: Peggy Ashcroft as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, 1938. The photograph is reproduced from *Adaptation* by Robert Tannahill (London: Hutchinson, 1974, £5.95, 0-09-171030-0).

Republican values and the academic vice

Patrice and Anne Higonnet

JACQUES VERGER (Editor)
Histoire des Universités en France
432pp. Toulouse: Privat. 140 fr.
27089 5333 8

L. W. B. BRUCKLISS
French Higher Education in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A cultural history
544pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £50.
0 19821988 1

PHILIPPE LUCAS
L'Université captive
180pp. Paris: Publisud. 98 fr.
2866 00276 8
ANTOINE PROST
Éloge des pédagogues
224pp. Paris: Seuil. 79 fr.
202 009007 4

All four books under review avoid the aridity of institutional history, and treat the French university as an integral part of French politics and culture. They chronicle different moments in French history, but resemble each other in their breadth of inquiry. Their authors pose questions to the past which resonate in the present. Did, for instance, medieval university graduates find jobs because of their degrees or in spite of them? Did the university system spread or stifle the Enlightenment? Do institutions of higher learning reproduce social forms or challenge them? Perhaps because all four authors understand the relevance of their subjects, their various queries join in one final, and contemporary, question: Why are today's universities such a mess?

Are the universities to be blamed? French culture? The State? Something has gone dreadfully wrong. In 1976 the infamous Alice Sami-Séité intoned: "never since the eighteenth century has [French] public opinion been so disappointed by the universities". In September of 1987, a *Sofres / Nouvel Observateur* poll confirmed her prognosis. Though 46 per cent of those polled judged teachers to be as competent as before, 57 per cent esteemed teaching ill-adapted to contemporary society, and 59 per cent sensed a decline in teachers' prestige. One further statistic locates the problem. Seventy per cent of those polled agreed that *chercheurs* (researchers) should be the most highly paid profession in France. The disappointment, clearly, is not with professional intellectuals as individuals,

but with the university system which produces them and within which most of them work. (In France many holders of doctorates also teach in the upper levels of the secondary, *lycée*, system.)

Too many students chase too little money. The Ministry of National Education spends 20,000 francs per year on a secondary school student and 13,500 francs on a university enrollee, less than most other major Western countries. University buildings deteriorate. Shabby, poorly lit, badly furnished and littered with cigarette butts, the venerated Sorbonne gleams in comparison with the nearly new but even more dilapidated *Universités de Paris* like Paris VII-Jussieu. A young *agrégé* earns 6,914 francs a month. Rare and powerful is the professor who has a respectable office of her or his own. Libraries are crowded and under-budgeted. Much of the Bibliothèque Nationale staff went on strike for part of last summer. Many laboratories and some university departments in the sciences remain well funded. Overall, however, the outlook is discouraging. *The grande misère* of the English dons has its French counterpart, but where in France would one find even the vestigial *splendeur* of Oxbridge colleges?

The morale of both students and faculty suffers. Most university students wish they were elsewhere, in the *Grandes Écoles*. But the primary characteristic of these prestigious and frequently repainted institutions is their small scale. Everyone dreams of the Conseil d'État, but only 10 per cent of young *bacheliers* compete for admission to institutions that lead to such jobs. All feel the chill; very few are chosen; and most feel second-rate. Twenty-four-year-old graduates of the École Nationale d'Administration immediately enter the Inspectorat des Finances, where they rule France's budgets, but ordinary university diplomas are not worth much, if anything at all. The recompense for excellent and imaginative research - in the humanities and soft sciences especially - is often dubious; fly-by-night, short-term contracts in Paris, or (what is perceived to be) the stultifying stasis of provincial universities.

As the ship sinks, the "Grands Intellos Parisiens" find refuge in the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique think-tanks, in the École Pratique des Hautes Études, or, best of all, in the Collège de France. Some create institutes like Derrida's Centre International de Philosophie, whose flexibly separate status emphasizes how intractable the main system

has become. At this high level, university intellectuals live well, but their situation is exceptional. A massive backlog of tenured appointments (1,969 posts occupied in 1961-12, 123 in 1981) leaves virtually no positions open to aspiring candidates. The nurturing leftist professional culture of the post-war years has virtually collapsed. While Foucault warned against established channels of power and expression and advocated a "pensée du dehors", rare is the academic now who would turn down an offer to appear on Bernard Pivot's prime-time television talk-show *Apostrophes*. Many professors are discouraged, many students are bored. (As Antoine Prost delicately puts it in *Éloge des pédagogues*, "La problématique de la vie scolaire situe la cause des difficultés dans le désintérêt des élèves et leur absence de motivation.") The whole system is like the catalogue(s) of the Bibliothèque Nationale: unwieldy, incomprehensible and beyond repair. Only the regulations of the *doctorat d'état* change, back and forth at a bewildering pace, as if to distract from the bureaucratic sludge creeping over everything else.

The books under review establish precedent for this modern situation. Judging from most of the essays in Jacques Verger's collection, the French university system has been declining steadily since the twelfth century. At that time, but only for a short while, French universities really worked. The monarchy respected their independence; their international reputation drew many foreign students; exams were rigorous; corporate institutions of higher learning governed themselves efficiently; high culture and the universities spoke in the same voice; the new institutions expanded ancient classifications of knowledge. University graduates found increasing employment in burgeoning royal and clerical bureaucracies.

By 1400, university programmes had fossilized. The same issues were endlessly reverted to in sterile books and manuals. Acquisition of this more urgid knowledge required much greater effort: by the fourteenth century, the degree of master of arts in theology entailed thirteen years of study. Corruption crept into the awarding of degrees, which became certificates of (uncertain) attendance rather than of proficiency. Stand-ins were hired to pass exams. Foreign students went elsewhere. By 1789, the University of Reims, Saint-Just's Alma Mater, was, in the words of Dominique Julia, "une simple machine à produire des gradués".

High culture and university culture diverged.

L. W. B. Bruckliss, in his magisterial and superbly researched book (summarized in his contribution to Verger's excellent collection), heroically tries to prove the reverse. He emphasizes the dissemination, through the universities of Louis "le Bien Aimé", of both Newtonianism and Enlightenment work in the natural sciences, but Bruckliss's admirable argument in the end struggles too hard against his own evidence, which suggests universities fulfilling no social function, shorn of prestige and bereft of administrative autonomy. At the onset of the Revolution, the French university went into complete eclipse.

Reformers have tackled the system indirectly. From the Renaissance onwards, they skirted the central problem by creating peripheral institutions. In the sixteenth century, new colleges sprang up next to the old faculties. The Collège de France dates from 1530. The Paris University, of course, did all it could to thwart the development of outgrowths like the Jesuit colleges - but in vain. In the eighteenth century, an activist and industrializing France renewed this reforming stance with the first modern technical schools, the École du Génie or Mézières in 1748, the Ponts-et-Chaussées in 1747, the Écoles des Mines in 1783. After 1789, a third and Revolutionary wave left on the shores of institutionalized knowledge not only the École Normale and École Polytechnique but the Langues Orientales as well. At the end of the nineteenth century, yet another type of special school developed, like the École Française des Sciences Politiques (1872), the Hautes Études Commerciales (1881) and the École Pratique des Hautes Études (1868), whose last offshoot in 1975 was the École Pratique des Hautes Études de Sciences Sociales, a recent complement to the post-war CNRS.

Today's French university system dates back to its rebirth in the first decades of the Third Republic. This was the university of Taine, Lavis, Ferry and Buisson. As in the Middle Ages, in an anticlerical register, university and State functioned according to the same principles. Virtually free and nominally open to all, the university seemed both the proof and the guarantor of a meritocratic republican individualism. Educational opportunity and Grandes Écoles scholarships furnished evidence of the Republic's joint commitment to social egalitarianism and social promotion.

According to this logic, at once universalist and bourgeois, pedagogic and political ideology meshed perfectly. This harmony rested on

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a Kantian belief in the relevance of abstraction to daily life; it assumed a connection between the humanities and bureaucratic or professional careers. Moreover, it depended in practice on what it denied in theory – the very limited accession to the universities of a middling élite which ratified its premises. Thus a democratic university system operated on budgets limited enough to satisfy the taxpayer. The universities prospered: professors enjoyed prestigious careers; students emulated their professors. After 1950, the system fell in under its own weight. Application in good faith of a democratic pedagogical doctrine swelled the size of the student body and the universities' budgets beyond control. Meanwhile the relevance of civic humanism became less clear. Inevitably, existing institutional structures (both personal and material) were overloaded, university degrees in turn devalued, and professorial prestige thereby diminished.

The institutional solution of these travails was a *fin de siècle* event. The educational establishment responded to a democratization of society, as it had in the past, with élitist circumvention. The gap has widened relentlessly between provincial intellectuals imprisoned in decaying universities, and Parisians who make their mark outside the university system altogether. The irony is that these few successful intellectuals are at least as successful as their foreign counterparts. French academics work relentlessly and brilliantly outside university halls: with publishers, on television, in publications and conferences of all sorts. Georges Duby presides over the European cultural television station, *Le Sept*, Roger Chartier and Michelle Perrot review books for *Libération*, Jean-François Lyotard wrote a *Que sais-je?* booklet on phenomenology. Anglo-Saxon doctoral dissertations, like the pages of the TLS, are studied with references to French thinkers. Paris is still the finishing school for many foreign PhD students.

There may be a lesson to be learned from the extra-curricular energy of French academics. Perhaps the cultural life of other countries would benefit from an analogous extension of professorial talents into more mainstream media. In France, however, the problems of the university system remain. Individual academics seem to achieve in almost inverse proportion to their integration into the university system. The situation's basic dilemmas are inescapable and can only grow worse. Intellectual talent is stifled by neglect, overcrowded classrooms, understaffed libraries and overwork. If talent survives the university, it then faces diversion into the secondary school system, where it benefits no one, since the overqualification of *lycée* teachers leaves them miserable. As Frost shows, *lycée* students have legitimate complaints, because the perhaps brilliant but frustrated *agrégé* or *docteur es lettres* is arguably a less competent teacher than the perhaps average but directed and devoted teacher of times gone by. Sooner or later, the problem will spread upwards. The *concours de l'agrégation* is registering a steep drop in candidates. Some gloomily announce a crisis in French intellectual life – the sense of a great generation dead or dying with none to take its place. "Où sont les Barthes d'antan?" Is it a blessing or a curse that so many of those who attend high-level French seminars were trained – and funded – elsewhere? The French intellectual élite looks abroad for teaching appointments, seeking sabbaticals at American universities.

Struggling to survive as a bureaucracy on the terms of its own past, the university system drifts further every year from the needs and conditions of contemporary French society.

Gambit

Knotted amorphous purple grotesqueries,
lubers of malformed beetroot – the succisson
arthritic fingers of my father
fumblingly clutch at a worn set with pawn skull,

counter, at least for a couple of moves, the pressing advance of
(tongue-lolling, wild-eyed) the crazed palfrey of pale polished ash.

PETER READING

More than an inability to meet the educational needs of the nation, the problem of the French university is its futile attempt to function according to a political and pedagogic ideology that no longer works. The system's practice contradicts its principles. One must be relinquished for the other to survive. Either the current priority of a traditional arts and sciences programme can be maintained, or the universalist doctrine of a higher education available and relevant to the whole of society. Not both.

The Chirac government flirted with the first solution last year. Its controversial reforms may indeed have been the thin end of Americanization's wedge. Its mild proposals of differentiated degrees and higher fees could have been only another in a long line of *ad hoc* remedies. Or they could be interpreted as the first steps towards a *privatisation* favoured by the government in other domains: towards an allegedly elitist higher education for those who compete and pay. Student riots made it clear that such a solution is politically impossible.

Yet the alternative is no less difficult. Universities, in order to integrate themselves into contemporary French society, may have to re-evaluate what higher learning means. Useless degrees in the humanities and social sciences would have to be recognized for what they are. Does it serve the purposes of the French polity to persist with what is now called a university education? Does the French economy, or French culture, benefit from the thousands of disillusioned students who slog through DEAs, licences, *Maîtrises* and *doctorats de troisième cycle* (let alone the elephantine though much-beloved *doctorat d'état*) as they are now constituted? A traditional arts and sciences education equips only those very few who go on to careers in the liberal professions, which, far from being the universalist occupations they were deemed to be under the Third and Fourth Republics, are now the marginal vocational occupations of a post-industrial, mediocrity society. The answer to the crisis of the French university system cannot lie in rear-guard attempts to provide degenerate versions of superannuated degrees to an ever-increasing number of hapless students.

The practice of the system can only be truly changed if its fundamental assumptions are rethought. Archaic definitions of information and learning cannot be infinitely distended over time and space. Industrialization has run its course in France as in other Western nations, and with it the canons of academic disciplines which defined university curricula. In its place have come interdisciplinary approaches, media or computer technologies, and the kind of artisanal recasting of manufacturing exemplified by, for instance, the legendary Romans shoe factory, where the union of clever advertising, craft traditions and modern mechanics has so brilliantly revived a flagging industry and a waning market. To train the kind of mind which makes connections between the humanities or social sciences, applied skills and computer technology, the university system must diversify its goals and its teaching methods. To do so, it may well have to resort to the kind of contracting with industry and commerce which Lucas advocates in *L'Université captive*. Whether or not this can occur under the aegis of the State will remain a question of leftist versus rightist notions of State intervention. Administered in the public or the private sector, such a diversified university system would radically reinterpret what "intellectual" means. Technological competence of all sorts would share pride of place with the humanities and social sciences as the basis for a general advanced education.

Already the French government subsidizes



"The Swag of Marshal Ney", 1810, by Marie-Etienne Godefroid, a successful portraitist who specialized in painting the children of the famous. The picture is reproduced from Women Artists: An Illustrated history by Nancy G. Heller (234pp, with 125 colour illustrations. Virago, £30. 0 86068 933 6).

several apprenticeship programmes and administers schools like the École Louis Lumière which trains film technicians. But for these programmes to be considered as vocational options by those who now flock to the universities, they must be revalued as intellectual, economic and cultural equivalents of

what is now a standard university programme. The elements for a dynamic university system exist; but they need to be rethought as such elements. The crisis of French higher education is not so much a crisis in either its form or its content, but in the paralysing disjunction between the two.

Getting out of the house

Jane Lewis

CANDIDA ANN LACEY (Editor)
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the
Langham Place Group
485pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £25.
07102 09479
DALE SPENDER (Editor)
The Education Papers: Women's quest for
equality in Britain, 1850-1912
366pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £25.
07102 11260

These two books both show that the nineteenth-century feminist struggle encapsulated much more than a demand for the vote. The campaign for better educational and employment opportunities was an integral part of feminist efforts to break down the rigid division between the private sphere of the family, to which women were confined, and the public world of work and citizenship.

Without access to education, women had little hope of refuting arguments, legitimated by Victorian and Edwardian scientific thinking, about the nature of sexual difference. George J. Romanes's conviction that "it must take many centuries for heredity to produce the missing five ounces of the female brain" was widely shared in a society that stopped women acquiring skills and capacities beyond the level of "accomplishments", and then refused them access to secondary and further education on the grounds that those capacities were "naturally" absent. As late as 1912, a leading physician, Sir Almoth Wright, opined that in view of their inherent disabilities, women were fortunate that they could count on being kept by a husband or father. Yet, despite the odds, women proved remarkably successful in securing equal access to education. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of these collections of papers from the archives of the Pankett Library is the mixture of pragmatic and principled arguments that feminists offered.

The Langham Place Group argued pragmatically, on the evidence of highly publicized evidence from the 1851 Census (which revealed an imbalance in the sex ratio and the existence of a large number of "surplus women" who could not hope to marry), that many women could not after all count on being kept by a man. No Victorian feminist argued

for women's right to combine marriage, motherhood and paid work, although Barbara Bodichon came remarkably close. Rather, they highlighted the plight of women who could not achieve marital bliss in order to campaign for better educational provision and wider employment opportunities. Certainly the genteel poverty of the retired governess was real enough. The Langham Place Group and educational pioneers such as Emily Davies, who established Girton, and Dorothea Beale, founder of Cheltenham Ladies College, were concerned first and foremost with the position of middle-class girls and women. The education of workhouse girls was often mentioned, but only in terms of the need to teach domestic science – an element of curriculum which caused considerable heart-searching when it came to middle-class girls, and which was for the most part firmly subordinated to academic subjects.

Notwithstanding the weight of scientific opposition, there is a sense in which Victorian feminists managed to capture the high moral ground in the debate over women's proper place. They did it by appealing to what were broadly agreed to be women's natural strengths. The public world was dominated by ideas of self-interest and competition and the family was defended as a haven of altruistic behaviour. But between the two hovered the concept of public service, successfully used to justify the philanthropic good works performed by a multitude of middle-class Victorian women. Time and again the papers in these volumes appeal to the Victorian values of Christian duty and usefulness and deplore the self-indulgence of the time-consuming social rituals observed by the majority of middle-class wives and daughters, such as calling and card-leaving. Such criticism could be resisted but not easily gainsaid.

With the advantage of hindsight, it is easy to criticize the Victorian feminists' simple faith that access to education and work would bring liberation. Candida Ann Lacey and Dale Spender are right to draw attention to the fact that contemporary feminists still face difficulty in conceptualizing equality for women. These collections of papers bring out the extraordinary courage and determination of late nineteenth-century feminist pioneers, who operated in a world that labelled all women as naturally inferior to men and confined the vast majority of middle-class women to a set of stifling domestic routines.

For the good of others

Robert Pinker

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British Social Reform and German Precedents:
The case of social insurance 1880-1914
243pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
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An Edwardian Mixed Double: The
Bosquets versus the Webbs: A study in
British social policy 1890-1929
407pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.
019 8301117

John Moore, the Secretary of State for Social Services, recently declared that undue dependence on statutory welfare "saps the vitality of a society", a pronouncement which lends an ironic topicality to these two books dealing respectively with the origins of the British welfare state and the demise of the Victorian poor law.

Poverty was a major topic of political debate in late Victorian Britain. The poor law system, which was the last resort of the destitute, had been reformed on deterrent principles in 1834; consequently in many cases charity was the only alternative to the workhouse or out-relief. The Friendly Societies and other self-help and mutual aid associations were largely supported by the respectable working class, which had the incentive and the means to practise thrift. By the turn of the century the social surveys of Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree had provided conclusive evidence that a sizeable minority of the population lived in poverty because of low or irregular wages, unemployment, disability, sickness, bereavement or old age.

The political debate was centred on the causes of poverty, the pros and cons of the State playing a more active role in the prevention and relief of poverty, how that role should be executed and similar issues. By the end of the 1880s, Germany had become committed to a compulsory social insurance programme covering a wide range of contingencies, but in Britain the balance of informed opinion remained hostile to government intervention on such a large scale, on the supposition that it would result in "mass pauperization" and over-dependence on the State and that the voluntary principle was more likely to foster independence and was more in keeping with British political traditions.

The Charitable Organisation Society was founded in 1870 by zealous advocates of the voluntary principle, specifically to resist State intervention and reorganize both poor relief and charitable giving on "scientific" lines. The COS worked on the assumption that generosity based on sentiment would demoralize the poor and discourage self-help. Therefore it was agreed that the character – and the means – of all applicants for relief should be scrutinized in order to separate the deserving from the undeserving poor. The former would qualify for assistance and counselling on the virtues of thrift but the latter would be referred to the poor law and the workhouse. The principles of the COS have often been equated with "Victorian values". Whatever the justice of this comparison, informed public opinion had changed fundamentally by 1914. Voluntarism gave way to compulsory insurance as the dominant principle in British social policy and the entire poor law system was called in question.

With regard to social insurance E. P. Hennock argues that the changes in British outlook and policy in the period between 1880 and 1914 were influenced by the German example. His three-stage analysis of this transformation – revisionist, imitative and rivalrous – begins in 1887 with the government select committee on old age, which firmly rejected the German model in favour of voluntary insurance and employer-based schemes. It was not insurance to which the committee took exception but the compulsory principle, with its connotations of Prussian "regimentation". What little information was available on the German scheme met with hostility or indifference on the part of most British politicians as well as of the Friendly Societies and the trade unions.

By the time of the Liberal administration of 1905, however, there was expert advice to be had and reliable members of the government, Lloyd George and Churchill were more

disposed to listen to it. Shortly after the government introduced its modest tax-funded old-age pension scheme in 1908, Lloyd George went to Germany to see for himself and returned a convert, having "firmly grasped the nettle of compulsion". His National Health Insurance Act of 1911 was modelled on German lines. Although the two schemes differed in methods of funding, coverage and administration, the British act was based on the compulsory insurance principle. It therefore represented a fundamental change not only in the character of British liberalism but in the relationship between the State and civil society.

A. M. McBriar focuses his study of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws on two of the most famous partnerships in the history of British social policy, Helen and Bernard Bosanquet and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Helen and Beatrice were both appointed commissioners at the start of the inquiry in 1905 and they received assiduous support from their husbands for their sharply conflicting views on the future role of poor relief. As leading members of the COS the Bosanquets stood for a return to the principles of 1834; the Webbs, as leading Fabians, wanted total abolition of the poor law.

McBriar's extended metaphor of a mixed doubles tennis match aptly portrays these two determined women, with the invaluable assistance of their husbands, turning the Royal Commission into a war of attrition which was destined to end in stalemate. In matters of social policy Bernard was the philosophical driving force in the Bosanquet team, not to mention the entire COS. He had formulated an idealist theory of the state, based on a concept of the "general will", which owed as much to Rousseau and Hegel as to his former tutor, T. H. Green. In Bosanquet's approach, however, the role of the State was limited to one of creating the conditions in which individual citizens would be able to develop their own characters and thereby discover a collective sense of purpose. The potential power of the human mind was such, in his opinion, that, given the right incentives, it would usually enable the individual to rise above adverse circumstances. Social policies facilitating dependence on the State would destroy these incentives and compound the problem of pauperism. Helen spent most of her time putting this theory into practice under the aegis of the COS. The Cambridge idealist philosopher J. M. E. McTaggart thought that Bernard's theorizing was so metaphysical that practical reformers would do better with some form of hedonistic utilitarianism.

What the Webbs offered was utilitarian efficiency in abundance, without a hint of hedonism. Although they were not yet committed socialists, they were already ardent collectivists who believed that, while character was important, the greater part of poverty was caused by deficiencies in the social structure. They argued that if the State would guarantee a national minimum in welfare provision ordinary people might get some chances of developing their characters. They had no qualms whatever about getting tough with the genuinely work-shy, but they believed that the best test of character was an offer of work. There was substance in both approaches to the problem of poverty, although the Webbs perhaps came closer to striking the right balance between character and social structure. According to McBriar it would be wrong to interpret this conflict of views as one between individualists and collectivists. The Bosanquets and the Webbs were equally critical of neo-classical economics and eager to develop new forms of sociology and social economics which would express a more organic and co-operative view of social life.

The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws was manifestly doomed to failure from the start by a surfeit of character and commitment. McBriar describes the period of nearly five years when Beatrice attacked and Helen defended the "orthodox" poor law doctrines and the end result was a divided commission and two separate reports. Although there was consensus on many issues, the sticking-point proved to be the future of the poor law itself. The Majority Report, written largely by Helen, favoured transferring the functions of the poor law *en bloc* to the local authorities. The Minority Report, written entirely by the

Webbs, argued for the break-up of the poor law and transference of its various functions to separate local authority committees.

In the event – partly because both sets of proposals mixed complex and costly issues of tax reform and partly because the leading ministers had moved on to more urgent matters like national insurance and reassessment – the Liberal government received both reports and did nothing. When war came in 1914 the problem of poor law reform was set aside and not dealt with until 1929, when a Conservative government transferred the poor law (renamed public assistance) to the local authorities, giving them the option to take the hospital services out of the poor law altogether. In retrospect it is clear that, while McBriar's match-players thought that they were challenging for the trophy, the prize-givers had left early in search of other champions. As the Poor Law Commission had been deliberating, the really important policy initiatives had been skillfully steered round the poor law, leaving it more isolated than ever before.

The Webbs may have been out of tune with or ahead of their time but the golden age of poor law orthodoxy to which the Bosanquets looked back had never really existed. As the Webbs had demonstrated in their brilliant historical analysis, the architects of the 1834 act had never intended to subject the non-able-bodied to the full rigours of less eligibility; their mistake had been to assume that most paupers were able-bodied when in fact the majority of workhouse inmates were children or sick, disabled or elderly people. The whole concept of deterrence was thoroughly compromised when it was decided in the 1860s to develop an entirely new hospital system within the poor law. By the mid-1880s patients admitted to the new hospitals were no longer disinfranchised, if only because infectious middle-class patients had nowhere else to go. It is not surprising therefore that in 1905 the poor law inspectorate were prepared to give up all their hospitals in order to clear the path for a truly deterrent destination authority. By that time the poor law was providing far and away the biggest hospital service in Britain and this is an important aspect of the story which McBriar overlooks.

Nevertheless these are excellent books, illustrating in conjunction both the direct and the indirect effects of the German approach to social security on British social policy. Hennock concentrates on the former and its role in the adoption of compulsory insurance. McBriar shows how Lloyd George's espousal of the insurance principle and the Webbs' rejection of it probably sank the Minority Report, thereby delaying the break-up of the poor law for another twenty years. At a historical working breakfast with Lloyd George, Churchill and Haldane in 1908, the Webbs were invited to endorse the insurance principle in their forthcoming report, but they refused on the grounds that compulsory insurance would do nothing for the very poor and would prove to be "ridiculously expensive and cumbersome to administer".

It would be specious to invoke the spectre of the poor law in order to prejudice the present government's review of the structure of the British welfare state, but the government would be wrong in thinking that there are ready-made alternatives to hand. If history has anything to teach social reformers it is that events are shaped by unique combinations of character and circumstance and that borrowing policies from other countries works best if those policies are consistent with changes already under way in their own society. Hennock shows how clearly this was understood by Lloyd George.

The Bosanquets and Webbs come across as admirable rather than likeable people. The courage with which they backed up their formidable convictions was such that they were bound to give an impression of intolerance and of knowing too well what was good for others. Yet our wary respect for the women in these partnerships is gradually tempered with sympathy as the punishing years of unremitting work leave Helen a semi-invalid and Beatrice – despite Sidney's indefatigable support – exhausted by the effort, and neither couple enjoying the consolations of victory. At the end McBriar's metaphorical tennis-match seems more like a boat race in which all contestants are disqualified as they cross the line.

Shaping spirit

Theo Hoppen

RICHARD BRENT
Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, religion,
and reform: 1830-41
340pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £32.50.
019 829429

Having held much of the high ground in Victorian times, religion as an element in historical understanding experienced rapid decline after the First World War when, on the one hand, trivializers purported to see it as no more than a minor planet in the social history firmament, while, on the other, true believers seemed happy to confine themselves to sectarian pieties such as studies of Reconsecration in the Lake District or Presbyterian Worthies in the Outer Hebrides. So barren a state of things was bound eventually to create a reaction, the gathering power of which has been associated above all with a number of Cambridge historians and most controversially with the writings of J. C. D. Clark, whose work has in large part been directed to presenting religion as a crucial (if not the crucial) explanation for political developments in his chosen period.

Clark, however, is clearly not alone, for emerging from behind his eye-catching general constructions we can now see the outlines of other, mainly nineteenth-century, historicoreligious enterprises beginning to emerge. J. P. Parry has just published a splendidly lively book on Gladstone and the Liberal Party in the 1850s and 1860s which argues passionately that Victorian politics remain quite opaque if treated in primarily secular terms. Boyd Hilton's subtle contribution to Owen Chadwick's recent festschrift shows how different views of divine providence could energize different Victorian attitudes towards the state's role in economic and social affairs. And now Richard Brent, in a wonderfully sensible and coherent account, forces us all to look at what once seemed the alternately crass, lazy, over-confident and hyperactive Whiggism of the 1830s in an entirely new way.

What Brent has done is to identify a crucial group (Russell, Althorp, Morpeth, Ebrington and Duncannon among them) whose political cast of mind depended ultimately upon an identifiable "liberal Anglican" perception of human nature, history and contemporary events. And although Whiggery still included a more obviously Foxite element it was the liberal Anglicans who achieved dominance and sought, on the one hand, to gather both Protestant and Catholic Dissenters into the political nation, and, on the other, by sponsoring educational and ecclesiastical reform, to complete the transformation of the constitution from a thing entirely Anglican into one that was almost entirely non-sectarian, yet Christian.

The argument is clearly presented and supported with materials from a wide range of sources and relating to an equally wide range of contemporary topics and debates: university and church reform, elementary education, anti-slavery, Ireland, taxation and so on. Russell in particular emerges as far more coherent and impressive than has usually been appreciated and it is fascinating to see how he succeeded in "altering the concerns of Whiggery from an interest in the mechanics of the constitution to a consideration of its moral foundations". If the author's grand claims for the continuing influence of his liberal Anglican Whigs beyond the grave of electoral defeat in 1841 are perhaps a little hard to accept – it would surely be as convincing to see some of the mid-century interest in reform as the product of infant Liberalism rather than geriatric Whiggery – he has undoubtedly restored to proper prominence the achievements of a group towards which historians have too long used their unattractive talent for ignorant disdain.

This is, indeed, a coherent and impressive book made all the more convincing by a steady and sensible refusal to push arguments beyond the bounds of evidence or common sense. Reading it suggests that, in the nineteenth century, religion as an intellectual and theological entity was not simply "important" but helped in a dynamic manner to shape many of the most influential political and governmental ideas of the time.

Some talk of Alexander ...

Linda Colley

GERALD NEWMAN
The Rise of English Nationalism: A cultural history 1740-1830
294pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £19.95.
0297791451

This book's combination of penetrating insight and questionable analysis is typified by its opening sentence: "It is strange", declares Gerald Newman, "to think how greatly English nationalism has eluded our scholarly attention." But Britain is, after all, an island. As such it has been able to defeat foreign invaders for more than nine hundred years; it has avoided the incessant frontier disputes that have bedevilled large parts of Western and Eastern Europe; and so its people (particularly the English) have been able to take their nationality for granted.

From the political union with Scotland in 1707 to the Second World War the rulers of Britain were primarily empire-builders, concerned to explore and exploit a wide variety of cultures. Imperialists are bound to regard nationalism as an anathema because it is the great enemy of empire. American nationalism over Britain the thirteen colonies in 1776; Indian and African independence movements destroyed its power in the Third World; and, from the sixteenth century onwards, the essence of its Irish problem has been the vigour and varieties of Irish nationalism. It is scarcely surprising, then, that this country's propagandists and official historians have tended to treat nationalism as an alien, even subversive doctrine, and have emphasized instead loyalty to the Crown or a simple and nostalgic patriotism. Even today, the most chauvinist Tory politician is far more likely to invoke our national heritage (which is conveniently amorphous) than he or she is to define our national identity.

If conservatives have found English or British nationalism an embarrassment, so for a long time have more radical commentators. Whereas continental European scholars have

rightly regarded nationalism as a dynamic social, political and cultural phenomenon, left-wing Britons have been more inclined to dismiss it as an imposition of the State, and as a distraction from the far more important task of analysing British society in terms of class. Fortunately, attitudes are beginning to change, and the past ten years have seen a growing number of books, articles and theses which attempt to come to grips with patriotism and national consciousness in this country. Professor Newman's work, which is well researched, richly suggestive and of interest to students of English literature as well as to historians, is part of this trend. As such, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A cultural history 1740-1830* suffers perhaps from the sheer size of the topic as well as its relative novelty.

Newman's thesis is seductively simple. He rightly sees a more assertive national sentiment emerging in England from the 1740s onwards, though the precise reasons for this timing are not given. Bourgeois writers, artists and activists were beginning to rebel against aristocratic hegemony, against English patriots who spoke French, went on the Grand Tour, patronized rococo artists, employed French cooks and mimicked French fashions and etiquette. For middle-class artists like Hogarth to proclaim the superiority of English values, English manners and English culture was a way of negating elite ideologies, of attacking the legitimacy of their dominance in the State and of advancing instead the claims to recognition of the *nouveau riches*. Newman links this heightened national consciousness with a variety of patriotic initiatives like the founding of the British Museum and the Royal Academy of Art, with the new cult of hero-worship which embraced figures as diverse as Shakespeare, Handel, the Elder and the Younger Pitt, Horatio Nelson and George III, and with what he calls "the moral elevation of the English national identity". Novelists and propagandists began increasingly to praise the bluff simplicity and sincerity of John Bull in contrast with the meretricious glitter and artificial mimes of the French. Perceptively, Newman connects this trend with the growth of political

radicalism. Men like John Horne Tooke, Major John Cartwright and William Cobbett found it easy to move from idolizing Saxon peasants to advocating their right to the vote.

Only in the 1780s and 1790s, it is argued, did English nationalism become a decisively conservative force. By opposing the French Revolution, the English élite was able to steal its opponents' anti-French rhetoric. Edmund Burke boasted of the sanctity of the English Constitution; evangelicals like Hannah More warned of the moral and religious dangers of French contamination. Yet the conservatives' victory was an ambiguous one. They kept the radicals and revolution at bay, but only by adopting middle-class values. Nationalism and moral earnestness — and the old and relaxed aristocratic cosmopolitanism — would become the leitmotifs of Victorian England.

Many of Newman's specific points deserve serious consideration, but his overall interpretation suffers from four major problems. First, as he must know, "nationalism" in this context is an anachronism. The French coined the concept during their Revolution, but it did not become common in Britain until the mid-nineteenth century. Newman uses the term because he wants to interpret growing national consciousness in this country primarily in cultural terms, and believes that "the artist-intellectual" played the central role in the movement. Yet — and this is the second problem — growing national sentiment in Britain was far more complex and had a far broader base of support than he allows. Successive wars, better communications and increased internal trade all played an important part. Culture did too: but it was far more democratic and variegated culture than the one Newman discusses. He says nothing, for example, about the vital role of the press, which dispersed metropolitan news and views throughout the kingdom. He says nothing about the fact that Britain was far more homogeneous linguistically than most other European countries. Most seriously, he says nothing about religion, although Protestantism, which bound together England, Scotland and Wales, and united all three countries against Catholic powers like

France, had been a crucial part of Britain's identity since the sixteenth century.

Third, while it is correct to connect some of the resurgence in national sentiment after the 1740s with the upwardly mobile middle classes, it is reductionist to explain the phenomenon mainly in these terms. What about George III, who proclaimed in 1760 that he gloried in the name of Britain? What about the supposedly cosmopolitan aristocrats who were in fact often nothing of the sort? By the 1760s many patriots were discarding their rococo artists and patronizing British painters like Ramsay, Gainsborough and Reynolds instead; many more joined the Antiquarian Society to explore Britain's past and rebuilt their mansions in what they believed was a traditionally nativist Gothic style. National consciousness in this period was not a unilinear development. All sorts of lobbies appropriated it to advance their own sectional claims, and it offered or seemed to offer different commodities to different customers.

This is not to downgrade the significance of a growing national cohesion after the 1740s, but rather to emphasize that the process was a hybrid one and that it was about Britain and not just England. This is Newman's final difficulty. Sometimes he talks about the British, sometimes he talks about the English, and often he treats the two descriptions as though they were synonymous. He seems not to notice that many of his so-called English nationalists were in fact from the Celtic Fringe. Edmund Burke and Oliver Goldsmith were Irish; John Brown, Tobias Smollett and James Burgh were Scots. These men preached the importance of a more developed national consciousness in large part because they were outsiders: they wanted a national ethos which would contain them and justify their claims to advancement.

In other words, nation states are in the end collocations of people. Nationalism is bound therefore to have many variants and many different meanings. Gerald Newman has sought to confine this diversity in one compelling synthesis; yet, as any politician might have told him, nations are not so easily comprehended.

Tea and sympathy

John Derry

PETER D. G. THOMAS
The Townshend Duties Crisis: The second phase of the American Revolution, 1767-1773
282pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.
019829674
JOHN SAINSBURY
Disaffected Patriots: London supporters of revolutionary America, 1769-1782
305pp. Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press/Gloucester: Sutton. £27.
0862993091

Both of these books illuminate our understanding of the American crisis and its reception in Britain, although they do so in different ways. While searching out the detail that lies behind many generalizations, Peter D. G. Thomas and John Sainsbury question many widely held assumptions, but their revisionism is cast in a style which seeks to persuade rather than to lecture, to correct earlier accounts without absolutely rejecting them. In each case exposition is related to a judicious weighing of the evidence. Both authors have consulted an impressive array of primary sources, but they are already appreciative of the findings of historical research over the past three decades.

Professor Thomas is concerned with the world of high politics, the manner in which governments reached decisions and the assumptions which determined how leading politicians responded to the news of riot and defiance in America. His main anxiety is to establish that the American crisis had already reached its critical turning-point before the Intolerable Acts were passed in reaction to the Boston Tea Party. He argues that the Tea Party was no more than the culmination of a chain of events which had been set in motion by Charles Townshend's duties, the bulk of Anglo-American confrontation in the early 1770s being superficial and illusory. The Townshend

duties raised fundamental issues about the sovereignty of Parliament and the subordination of the colonies to Britain which had not been resolved and could not be resolved.

One of the best features of Thomas's book is the subtlety with which he demonstrates how the American question was obscured or overlaid by other issues — the several phases of the Wilkes affair, domestic quarrels over taxation, disputes over the East India Company, the Falklands crisis, and the continuing debate over the influence of the Crown. While taxation and revenue were fundamental to the American crisis they were not the only preoccupations of British governments, and Thomas astutely shows how obsessed British politicians were with the problem of civil government in America, the status of colonial governors and assemblies, and the payment of colonial officials. A number of prominent combatants are rescued from misrepresentation — among them George Grenville, who was an opponent of anything smacking of arbitrary rule in America, his primary objective being the maintenance of parliamentary sovereignty over the colonies. Grenville meant what he said about the privileges and duties of free-born subjects of the British Crown, but he was eager to reject suggestions that the power of the Crown could be invoked to break the deadlock over a parliamentary sovereignty.

Again and again British governments sought, with commendable resource but little success, to strike the right balance between firmness and conciliation. After 1767 they were caught in a situation from which they could not escape. Thomas broods with a sense of high tragedy over the events which he narrates with such insight and skill.

Neither coercion nor conciliation was a practical option. Coercion might succeed in a limited sphere of action, as in Massachusetts in 1768-9, but Britain lacked the resources and the political will to hold down all the colonies all the time. Nor, in the context of British political opinion, was there a

stable solution of conciliation. By 1773 the colonies would remain in the British Empire only on their own terms. As voiced already in Massachusetts, this meant a cancellation of all British colonial measures since 1763, and no future interference by Parliament in the affairs of America. No British ministry would adopt such a reversal of attitudes, nor would Parliament have endorsed it.

The turning-point, according to Thomas, was the Cabinet meeting of May 1, 1769, when Grafton was unable to persuade his colleagues to repeal all of the Townshend duties. Yet even here Thomas comments on the significance of the decision in a distinctive way. The retention of the tea duty was urged by North in the hope of achieving Townshend's original aim of raising revenue for the payment of the salaries of colonial officials. "The symbolic gesture lay in the repeal of the other 'trifling' duties, not the retention of the tea duty." Again and again Thomas challenges conventional judgments, but always with good sense and calm discernment. He has written an excellent study, which is a model of how to construct a detailed political narrative in an analytical fashion.

Sainsbury is concerned with those who identified emotionally and politically with the American colonists in their struggle against the British Parliament. He differentiates the true friends of America from politicians seeking to exploit the American issue rather than to understand it, but he does not indulge in radical hagiography. He gives due weight to the constant quarrels and factious rivalry within the radical groups, and he scrupulously marks off radicals from Whigs more closely involved with the conduct of conventional politics. He highlights the significance of dissenters, merchants, tradesmen, wholesalers, retailers and craftsmen in the activities of the most enthusiastic of London's pro-American sympathizers. But he also points out that some dissenters were loyalists, that not every merchant supported the American cause, and that those who upheld Britain's right to tax her colonies were

not always persuaded to do so by the offer of government contracts. Quakers were often uneasy about becoming implicated in overt radical politics, and relations between the various radical societies were often sour. Sainsbury is both appreciative and critical of Wilkes, delineates the limits of Richard Price's radicalism, emphasizes Wyvill's justifiable anxiety not to allow the cause of parliamentary reform to become tarnished with pro-Americanism, and reveals how confused and contradictory the pro-Americans were when Catholic relief inflamed traditional prejudices. Bland generalizations about the Common Council of the City of London are deftly undermined by a patient analysis of the cross-currents of motivation and conduct.

Sainsbury concedes that the pro-Americans were powerless to influence the course of imperial events, but he sees them as more than a mere symptom of popular protest. They did much to transform the movement for political reform in Britain, assisting in the transition from assertions of despotism and corruption to a more mature commitment to a considered programme of parliamentary reform. At the same time he carefully avoids exaggeration, confessing that in the short term loyalty won the struggle for the support of public opinion. The range, vitality and eccentricity of radical movements are fully illustrated in a thoughtful evaluation of grass-roots politics during a period of intense controversy.

Aberdeen and the Enlightenment, edited with an introduction by Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pitcock (438pp. Aberdeen University Press. Paperback, £14.90 0 08 034524) is the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Aberdeen in August 1986. There are over forty papers in this collection whose subjects include philosophy, law, art and music. The influence of Macpherson's "spectacular Gaelic forgeries" of Ossian is traced, and Dr Johnson's pamphlet exposing them reprinted.

Ducal interventions

John Rosselli

HARVEY SACHS
Musical Fascist Italy
271pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £18.
0297790048

Musicians fortunately ambiguous. Except by setting words it can rarely say anything specific enough to glorify a totalitarian régime. Even triumphal marches tell us little about who is doing the triumphing: the Queen could alight at Westminster for a State opening of Parliament in the depths of the Suez crisis while a Guards band tooted away at the triumphal march of the Egyptian army from *Aida*. Studies of what happened to music under Nazism, Fascism or Stalinism therefore tend to be studies of what happened to musicians.

This is particularly true of Fascist Italy, where the régime never developed a view of the proper ideological development and content of music to compare with the demand for "socialist realism" in the Soviet Union — if one can so dignify the vituperation with which Zhdanov wrote himself down an ass. One or two composer-bureaucrats whose own music was conservative and none too successful tried to make out that neo-classicism — the dominant trend among the best Italian composers between the wars — was a nasty radical import, but Stravinsky, at that time the leading neo-classicist, on his frequent visits let them down by reiterating his "veneration" for the Duce: to him, neo-classicism and Fascism alike meant order.

The experience of musicians and musical organizations in the twenty years of Mussolini's régime none the less is a subject whose time has come, to judge from the appearance within three years of two books that cover much the same ground. Fiamma Nicolodi's *Musica e musicisti nel ventennio fascista* (reviewed in the TLS of January 3, 1986) and now this survey by a North American conductor, musicologist and biographer of Toscanini, who for a number of years has worked in Italy. Perhaps the impulse comes of what Harvey Sachs sees as the worst legacy of Fascism in this field, the entanglement of musical administration with party and government bureaucracy, which a few years ago led to multiple crises in Italian opera-houses. Though he has sections on matters not covered by Nicolodi — the behaviour of foreign musicians, interviews with survivors, and a fresh account of Toscanini's politics, with some new evidence of the obsessive concern he aroused in the régime — the overlap (which he acknowledges) is considerable; one sometimes wonders whether Sachs's gifts as a researcher could not have been put to more original use than uncovering yet more evidence of, say, Mascagni's self-serving hymns to "Divine Rome" or his muddled-headed flattery of "the Man who governs the Destiny of our Country" (and who he hoped would order slap-up productions of neglected Mascagni operas).

Both books are inevitably a good deal taken up with this kind of thing; the chief difference between them, details apart, is a more "Anglo-Saxon" moralizing tone in Sachs's account. Not that he expects artists to show great commitment or awareness. Most of them, he writes, "under any régime are notoriously

ignorant politically"; the great conductor De Sabata is reported to have been "so possessed by his musical demon that nothing else existed". But Sachs does lament the opportunism of many musicians who "adopted Fascist rhetoric in the hopes of furthering their own aims, generous or otherwise" — an opportunism "depressing rather than enraging" — dozens of Peer Gynts dutifully scratching their comas, hoping that the trolls will look beautiful to them". The composer Cusella managed to praise Hitler while befriending Jewish musicians. Malipiero pestered the Duce with requests for help against his fancied enemies. Gigli explained (in a post-war book too) that, when he repeatedly met Hitler in the 1930s, "I knew nothing of his political activities".

There is more, much more of this. Yet Sachs's book, diligent as it is, suffers from historical foreshortening. It somewhat neglects the roots of many of these musicians in pre-1914 nationalism and D'Annunzian aestheticism, which made acceptance of Fascism easy. It largely neglects two aspects of Fascism — the archaic and the ambiguously radical. In some ways Mussolini's fascination with spies' reports, his pleasure in manipulating suppliants and giving out favours, were a throwback to the pre-unification Italian States; and so was the readiness of so many musicians to fall in with them. The Duce intervening to ensure that the prickly Pizzetti let his new opera be put on at the Florence May festival might have

been the last Duke of Lucca (whom Puccini in a prophetic moment in 1898 longed to have back) hailing a tenor for the ducal theatre. For the government to subsidize theatres and chase box-holders for arrears was not, as Sachs suggests, novel: the old governments had done so for many years, with Liberal Italy a parenthesis.

On the other hand the forms that government intervention took in musical institutions — the setting up of quangos to run the main opera-houses, the encouragement of unionization and of welfare schemes — showed a good deal of continuity with pre-1914 radical and socialist thinking, even though distorted to impose Fascist control from the top and dressed up in "corporate" jargon. Sachs is sometimes a little hard on these initiatives: thus the Carro di Tespi (which took plays and operas to small-town and village audiences in fit-up marquees) no doubt suffered from poor acoustics, but so did early Arts Council tours of Welsh village-halls. He is, however, right in pointing out as the chief problem in arts administration the way that "the regime paralysed decision-making at sub-executive levels". Italy being Italy, some extraordinary, unexpected things happened ("degenerate" *Wozzeck* performed in 1942, fifteen years before London), but with the Duce supposed to know everything and decide everything music-making was sometimes duller and more inward-looking than it need have been.



A. Z. Kruse's "Musical Clown": from The Music Lover's Birthday Book (Gollancz, £7.95, 0 575 04161 7).

Operatic affinities

Winton Dean

HOWARD E. SMITHER
A History of the Oratorio
Volume Three: The Oratorio in the Classical Era
711pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £45.
0193152576

The first two volumes of Howard E. Smither's *History of the Oratorio*, published in 1977, took the story as far as the climax of the Baroque style, ending with Alessandro Scarlatti in Italy, Handel in England and J. S. Bach in Germany. This third volume, more massive than its predecessors, covers the remainder of the eighteenth century to the dawn of Romanticism early in the nineteenth. Whether a period that contributed so little to the repertoire — only Haydn's oratorios are at all familiar — needed such lengthy treatment is debatable, though it is doubtless prudent to look a gift horse in the mouth. Professor Smither, moving with the deliberate pace and comprehensive coverage of a steam-roller, deals with oratorios according to the language of their texts, discussing in turn works in Italian, English, German, French, and other tongues. He provides a painstaking examination of the social background (including patronage), the librettos and the general attributes of the music, ending each section with more detailed consideration of half-a-dozen representative works. These analyses, and especially the liberal musical quotations, are among the book's most valuable features.

The historian of oratorio has an elusive quar-

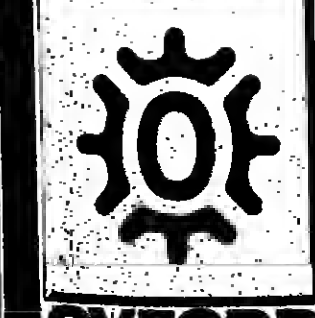

ry, since the term can mean different things in different countries at different periods — sometimes even at the same period — and has no central focus to which all its manifestations can be related in the way that opera stands or falls by its success in the theatre. At most periods oratorio has been yoked more or less closely to opera, and this is particularly true of eighteenth-century Italy, where enormous numbers of oratorios were produced. The same poets and composers took the lead in both, using the same forms and idioms, literary and musical. Smither's useful discussion of the *da capo* aria and its derivatives, which incidentally throws light on the evolution of sonata form, could as well stand for opera as for oratorio. The attempt, less stressed here than in the earlier volumes, to draw a distinction between oratorio and sacred opera, finally founders when Smither's *Mosè* is classed as an oratorio, though admittedly not every oratorio is as theatrical as P. C. Guglielmi's popular *Debora e Sisara* (1788), a feminist work (as it would be classed today) in the style of a comic opera. The important distinction, not drawn here, is between opera and oratorio, and church music, adhering to older traditional styles.

Many German oratorios followed the Italian model in everything except language, but here the literary influence of pietism and *Empfindsamkeit* (sensibility) evolved a more reflective form akin to the church cantata. Smither defines this as lyrical, which is a little confusing, and plays down the *empfindsam* element in what is surely the style's chief monument in the sphere of oratorio, C. H. Graun's immensely popular *Der Tod Jesu* (1755), on the ground that it is inapplicable to genres intended for large forces. The post-Handelian oratorio in

England perhaps receives more space than it deserves. The French oratorio never developed beyond a slightly enlarged sacred cantata. The sections on Iberian and Scandinavian oratorio decline into dry lists of facts, dates and librettos; the music is either lost or awaits discovery.

If these chapters (other than the German) yield a crop lacking in artistic sustenance, they throw up occasional entertaining curiosities. These include the first New World oratorio, Samuel Feist's *Jonah* (New York 1788, but published 1775 in vocal score); the first Russian oratorio, Degliantov's *Minin i Pozharskii* (1811), a patriotic demonstration remarkable for its titanic orchestra, embracing all current wind instruments except trombones, a formidable stand of percussion, a battalion of artillery and a Russian horn band; and Le Sueur's two short Latin oratorios on the story of Ruth. These were written for Napoleon's Tuileries Chapel — they had to be short because of the Emperor's impatience — and published with the same type of eccentric verbot commentary as Le Sueur's operas, drawing attention to their "patriarchal" idiom.

Smither's approach is that of an impartial recorder, not an enthusiast or a critic. He seldom permits himself a value judgment, though he writes perceptively about Haydn's *Il ritorno di Tobia* and *The Creation*, judiciously on Beethoven's *Christus am Oelberge*, and with some warmth on C. P. E. Bach's *Auferstehung*. He can be a little plodding; it is scarcely a revelation to be told, of several oratorios, that the minor mode is reserved for sorrowful effects. But as a repository of what specialists have discovered about the Classical oratorio it will prove an essential work of reference.

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Beyond twice-two

James L. Rice

JOSEPH FRANK
Dostoevsky
Volume Three: The Stir of Liberation, 1861-1865
395pp. Robson. £17.95.
084514242
FYEDOR DOSTOEVSKY
Selected Letters
Edited by Joseph Frank and David I. Goldstein
Translated by Andrew MacAndrew
543pp. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. \$29.95.
08175 11852

The third volume of Joseph Frank's prize-winning biography of Dostoevsky deals with a turbulent and creative half-decade, coinciding roughly with what Lenin called the First Revolutionary Situation. During this period Dostoevsky returned from Siberia after ten years of imprisonment and exile and regained pre-eminence in the world of Russian letters. Major works of that period include *House of the Dead*, which above all else made him famous in his lifetime, and *Notes from Underground*, neglected then but now, in the West, a classic of the underground curriculum. Fedor Mikhailovich also produced his first novel, *The Idiot* and *Injured*, two stories, and over 500 pages of criticism and commentary. The journalism is so often obscurely polemical and shifty in tone that scholars, including Frank, have had little success in deducing Dostoevsky's political or aesthetic credo from it. Nevertheless, the attempt is bound to be made.

In his preface, Frank calls attention to certain features of his *unpublished* literary biography. The "purely extrinsic, anecdotal details" of his subject's private life are not to be placed in the foreground, but instead "strictly subordinated" to the "social-cultural and literary context", which he considers to be "much more directly linked with creative production". It is regrettably true that the private life of Dostoevsky does not come under much scrutiny here, nor does Frank make good use of the memoir literature to clarify his subject's ideas, motives and manner of communicating. When the discussion focuses upon Dostoevsky's idiosyncratic faith this is a real handicap.

On the basis of limited evidence, Frank advances the theory of a "conversion experience" during Dostoevsky's term in prison. A number of closely related topics are raised without elucidation, such as Dostoevsky's "Christ ideal", "regeneration of convictions", "deepest pieties" (above all "the sacred memory of the muzhik Marej"), and the ecstatic aura preceding his epileptic seizures. Frank has given his opinions in these matters in the earlier volumes (reviewed in the TLS September 30, 1977, and August 17, 1984), but in my view, the argument for a conversion remains unconvincing. The ostensibly autobiographical story of "Muzhik Marej", on which Frank bases much of his case, has profoundly different variants in Dostoevsky's note-books and collateral texts. Furthermore, the change Dostoevsky describes in "Marej" is one of the psyche and of class-consciousness, not of religious conviction as Frank concludes. At the heart of "Marej" lies not conversion, but ambivalence, consistent with Dostoevsky's politics and world-view at every stage of his life.

Whenever he wrote about faith or Christ, whether in fiction, journalism, letters, or note-books, Dostoevsky left loop-holes for doubt, reason and even "truth". His private image of Christ is first described (in a letter of 1854) as a symbol constructed within himself during intermittent, God-given moments of calm and love. Yet he remained beset by "counter-proofs", thirsting for faith but declaring himself "a child of this age, a child of unbelief and doubt even now and (I am certain) until my coffin is closed". Even if it were proved to him that Christ and the truth are mutually exclusive, he would remain with Christ. Thus Dostoevsky sought to console his correspondent (a pious and long-suffering lady) with his own symbolic Christ, vested in paradox, burdened with doubt and besieged by proofs that truth may lie elsewhere. This is the essential Dostoevsky, in whose self-dramatizing manner a devil's advocate is always at work, consciously

or unconsciously. As his colleague and biographer Strakhov once noted irritably but off the record, Fedor Mikhailovich had a sly foulness for defending impossible positions with irrational and insupportable argumentation of the type "twice-two-is-five".

Frank's "sober effort" to discover a central meaning in *Notes from Underground* is a thankless task. The work is an irreducible hotch-potch of paradox, easily hinting at "something else" that remains unsaid. It is puzzling to learn that the "essential idea" of *Notes from Underground* was originally "the necessity of faith and Christ". In a letter to his brother, Dostoevsky claimed not simply to have "expressed" this idea (as Frank puts it), but to have *deduced* it, in passages suppressed by censorship. Dostoevsky's point, however, is particularly made: "Were the swinish censors in a plot against the government?" Moreover, the lost passages had been tucked away somewhere in the penultimate chapter of Part One. The "Christ idea" could only have been conveyed obliquely and by the Underground Man's

singular method of deduction. In the preceding chapter he asserts that twice-two-is-four is simply "iniquity", maybe something excellent after its fashion, but "twice-two-is-five is sometimes a cute little thing too". No doubt the necessity of faith and Christ was "deduced" by arguments of the twice-two-is-five sort. Human beings, observes the Underground Man in the same context, are comically constructed. It seems to me that Frank here strives too seriously to make a logical case for Dostoevsky's faith, and to place it rationally in this structure of aggressive paradox.

Frank discusses some of the manuscript documents published in recent decades. One of the most important of these (*Liternoe Naskelzhenie*, 83) is Dostoevsky's memorandum "Masha lies on the table. Will Masha and I meet again?", written the day after his wife's death (April 15, 1864). At first he dwells upon theology, man's striving for synthesis with God, annihilation of the ego, and presentiment of a future life "in direct emanations". However, the train of thought does not end on this mysti-

cally speculative note (as Frank and Soviet commentators suggest), but continues in a tone altogether of this world. The confusion of modern concepts, Dostoevsky felt, arises because scientific study of nature has only recently begun (with Descartes and Bacon), and because the law of human development impels us to draw conclusions from extremely insufficient data. Deducing final results from the present facts and resting content with that "is really something of which only the most limited natures are capable". Obviously subject to the "law of human development" were not only limited materialists like Chemyshyevsky and Sechenov, but also informed doubters like Dostoevsky himself. He saw twice-two plain as a pikestaff, but could not rest content. This was precisely the humbling dilemma that he dramatized in *Notes from Underground*, which he had not yet finished writing at the time of his wife's death. Looking forward to future volumes of his biography, Frank tells us that all of Dostoevsky's subsequent major works—all of his great novels—are "controlled by the framework of values in this notebook entry". We must hope this framework includes not only precariously visionary leaps to "a future life in paradise", but also the rational, secular, satirical intelligence which Dostoevsky possessed, making it impossible for him (as Freud correctly saw) "to overlook a single intellectual difficulty to which faith may lead" ("Dostoevsky and Parricide").

Dostoevsky's personal statements about faith and doubt are after all few and far between. However, it is known that his epileptic seizures, occurring on the average every three weeks, profoundly stimulated his religious reflections. Frank gives no idea of the melody's chronic impact, its great complexity, or what Dostoevsky termed its "dialectic". His convulsive seizures were often preceded by a brief ecstatic aura, but invariably followed by three to eight days of psychotic depression, which he described as "objectless guilt" and "mystical terror". Although three accounts of his aura include a variety of religious overtones, a fourth (overlooked by most biographers, including Frank) tells us that "his body was embraced by a certain inexpressible feeling of sexual voluptuousness", with no hint of exalted spirituality (Vranzel, *Vospominaniia*, 1912, 37). Evidently this symptom had to be described in different ways for different audiences, whatever it may have been in reality. Up to a point, Dostoevsky understood that his seizures were purely "mechanical" (as he tried to reassure his second wife); nevertheless he did not cease to be swayed by moral, parapsychological and metaphysical perceptions of his illness. It gave him access to experience which seemed to lie beyond reason and truth, with elements of both good and evil. Frank's few remarks on epilepsy thus far are quite misleading, and do not begin to do justice to this major problem in the context of Dostoevsky's belief or his creativity.

Near the beginning of this volume, Frank briefly discusses Dostoevsky's role as an executive secretary of the Literary Fund, "performing the tasks of an efficient and conscientious administrator" from 1863 to 1865. Frank himself finds it "difficult to imagine the Dostoevsky of popular conception" playing the part of an exemplary drudge, and indeed the dates here seem to be wrong. This elective service, such as it was, lasted only from February to July, 1863, as archival records attest. Then Fedor Mikhailovich resigned in order to borrow 1,500 rubles from the Fund, which he gambled away a few weeks later in Wiesbaden—true to the popular conception of Dostoevsky. It is only an anecdotal detail, to be sure, but one that deserves to be cherished.

The selection of Dostoevsky's letters edited by Joseph Frank and the late David Goldstein is thoughtfully compiled, and the texts have been translated by Andrew MacAndrew with obvious care. The volume contains 155 annotated letters, about 15 per cent of those that have been published in Russian editions. Dostoevsky's personality is multifarious and cunning, and certain facets of his mind do not appear at all in the correspondence. With this caveat, and if one is careful always to read between the lines, the selected letters offered in this edition will provide an excellent introduction to the creator of Goliadkin, Raskolnikov, and the Grand Inquisitor.

Afterword

I

The years are passing. On the palace's puce facade appears a crack. The eyelid seamstress's thread finally spears the midgel eye of the needle. And the Holy Family, their features drawn, severe, come half a millimetre more close to Egypt.

The visible world is settled by bulk of the living types. The streets are lit with a bright, extraneous light. And at night an astronomer reckons, straining his eyes, the total of sparkling tips.

II

I am no longer able to recall where or when events happened. This one, or any other. Yesterday? A few years ago? On a garden bench? In the air? In the water? Was it the matter?

And the event itself—an explosion or, say, a flood, the lights of the Kuzbass derricks or some betrayal—can't recall anything also, burying thus the trail of myself or of those who either were saved or fled.

III

This, presumably, means that we are now in league with life. That I too have become a segment of that rustling matter whose fabric's bleach infects one's skin with its neutral pigment.

In profile I too now can hardly be set

apart from some wrinkle, domino, patchwork, fig-leaf, from fractions or wholes, causes or their effects— from all that can be ignored, covered, stood in fear of.

IV

Touch me—and you'll touch a dry burdock's stems, the dampness intrinsic to evenings in late Marchember, the stone quarry of cities, the width of steppes, those who are not alive but whom I remember.

Touch me—and you'll disturb a little that which does exist regardless of me, clearly in the process not trusting me, my overcoat, my face—that in whose book we are always lusses.

V

I am speaking to you, and it's not my fault if you don't hear. The sum of days, by slugging on, ministers eyeballs; the same goes for vocal chords. My voice may be muffled but, I should hope, not nagging.

All the better to hear the crowing of a cockerel, the tick-tocks, in the heart of a record, its needle's pincer; all the better for you not to notice when my talk stops, as Red Riding Hood didn't mutter to her grey partner.

JOSEPH BRODSKY

Translated from the Russian by James Gambrell and E. T. Huddleston

Putting the Bureau first

Stephen E. Ambrose

RICHARD GID POWERS
Serecy and Power: The life of J. Edgar
Hoover
624pp. Century Hutchinson. £16.95.
009 1725984

J. Edgar Hoover's life was outwardly a mass of contradictions. Although he was America's staunchest defender of morality, champion of hearth and home, he never married. He made law and order into a cult, yet as head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for half a century, he broke more laws than the Mafia. One of the world's leading anti-Communists, by the late 1950s he had so thoroughly infiltrated the American Communist Party that nearly half the dues-paying members were FBI agents, who thus kept the party alive. He liked to portray himself as a team player and insisted that in the FBI it was always "we", never "I", but he was more successful in getting publicity for himself than any Hollywood star. A fierce opponent of violence in any form, he was the biggest agent provocateur of all time, constantly using his men to infiltrate radical organizations, where they promoted violent actions in order to justify FBI raids on the groups. Within the FBI he preached the virtue of loyalty, especially with regard to himself, but he seldom gave any loyalty to his own superiors.

But as Richard Powers shows in this competent and thoughtful biography, there was a consistency to Hoover's career. It was a defence of the FBI against all challengers, a determination to make it the best publicized bureaucracy in Washington, and a dedication to what he perceived as the best interests of his bureau. He created the FBI, nurtured it, shaped its image, and so managed it as to make it unassailable. A Congress that was capable of investigating and exposing the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was never courageous enough to investigate the FBI. Hoover's devotion to his bureaucracy was boundless, his success breathtaking.

Professor Powers does a masterful job of describing the elements of Hoover's success. He picked his targets carefully—alien immigrants with radical views in 1919, famous gangsters such as John Dillinger, Machine-Gun Kelly, Pretty Boy Floyd and Baby-Face Nelson in the 1930s, German-American Nazis in the early 1940s, American Communists in the McCarthy era, black leaders, civil rights advocates and the youthful New Left rebels in the 1960s. He had a keen sense of public relations, and established a close working relationship with the Hollywood producers, radio programme directors and television executives, always retaining a veto over any show—and there were hundreds—that dealt with the FBI and its activities. He made himself indispensable to those Presidents he liked, and a threat to those he did not; he used the abundant resources of the FBI to collect political gossip, which he passed on in a flood of memoranda to his favourites, Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson, or held over the heads, as not so subtle blackmail, of Harry Truman, Jack Kennedy, and Richard Nixon. Hoover insisted that he dealt only in the "facts". When he became assistant director of the Bureau of Investigation in 1921, it was an old-fashioned, slightly seedy detective agency. He became Director in 1924, changed its name to FBI, and reorganized it along scientific and professional lines, starting with his famous national fingerprint collection. But in reality his ever-growing "raw files" consisted of unsubstantiated allegations, half truths and full lies, along with unusable information (because illegally gathered, primarily through wiretaps, mail surveillance and the like). He promoted his "facts" by claiming that they spoke for themselves, but of course they never do, and in any case he was highly selective in the "facts" he chose either to make public or whisper to the incumbents in the White House.

He was also capable of the purest hate. He despised Communists and criminals, was contemptuous of liberals, and was enraged by the sight of any black man in a suit and tie. In the 1950s, he made Martin Luther King, Jr. into Public Enemy Number One. He arranged for microphones and recorders to be hidden in King's hotel rooms and then played the results for the edification and delight of various politicians as well as using them in a persistent attempt to blackmail King into committing suicide. Hoover had information on Jack Kennedy's sexual escapades long before anyone else suspected such things were going on, and he used this to protect himself, and the FBI, from Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who distrusted but feared him. For all his fascination with the sex lives of others, however, he was apparently uninterested in sex. His constant companion and closest associate for fifty years, Clyde Tolson, was widely believed to be a homosexual, but Powers is correct in insisting that no convincing evidence exists to show that Hoover was gay. Powers is also correct in insisting that Hoover's successes grew out of his aggressive response to demands for action at times of perceived national emergency. Hoover, he writes, knew instinctively that in times of panic the public's call for action must be answered, and he was able to discover creative and convincing ways to demonstrate that the government had the situation in hand. Always, Hoover warned that the alternative to the FBI in times of crisis was vigilante action, whether directed against Communists, blacks bent on promoting civil rights, New Left radicals, or gangsters.

But most of all, he was a success because of his instinctive sense of what the public would support. Richard Nixon knew that he had responded to oral hints from his predecessors to wire-tap the opposition, so when he became President, he ordered Hoover to put taps on high-ranking State Department officials suspected of leaking information, on the Democrats, and on newspaper reporters and television commentators. Hoover refused. Nixon ordered extensive mail coverage of his opponents. Hoover would not do it. Nixon insisted on surreptitious entry into the offices and files of his critics. Hoover said no. He also said no to Nixon's insistence that the FBI infiltrate and disrupt the peace movement. In fact, Hoover became the principal defender of constitutional rights and liberties in the Nixon Administration; indeed, at times he was the only such defender. It was because Hoover would not act that Nixon created the "plumbers" in the White House; it was the amateurism of the plumbers that led directly to Watergate.

As Hoover had done everything previous Presidents had asked him to do, Nixon was naturally and bitterly resentful at the refusal. Why the switch? It came about because Hoover put the fortunes of the FBI ahead of any other consideration, and by the time Nixon came to power, Hoover realized that what he had got away with before was no longer acceptable. The new threat he feared was Congressional investigation. If the FBI took the point in Nixon's assault on the Constitution, Hoover realized, it would be unable to defend itself in the new climate when the Democrats regained power. In short, he anticipated the Congressional inquiries into the CIA of the mid-1970s, inquiries that left the Agency in a shambles. There were no similar investigations of the FBI, although the Freedom of Information Act (1972, the year of Hoover's death), did open FBI files to serious scholars and thus exposed many of his grosser excesses.

Powers, who has made extensive use of the Freedom of Information Act in his biography, is even-handed in assessing the impact of Hoover. "Hoover's historic legacy", he writes, "is profoundly ambiguous." Powers condemns his "covert attacks on personal and public enemies" by portraying American communism" as a goal, by destroying American communism" and for creating "one of the great institutions in American government". Obviously, these are debatable assertions. He is on more solid ground when he concludes

A political system, a nation, cannot survive unless those who are frightened and endangered by change feel that their interests are being represented and protected. . . . For much of the century, for millions of Americans, J. Edgar Hoover was that bulwark and pillar. As long as they saw Hoover standing guard they could believe that the familiar community ruled by age-old traditions, the America they could recognize as the country they knew and loved, still endured.

True enough, but what really endured was the bureaucracy that was the only love of Hoover's life.

An eye for quality

William Maxwell

LINDA H. DAVIS
Onward and Upward: A biography of
Katharine S. White
300pp. New York: Harper and Row. \$22.50.
006015750X

The justification for a biography of Katharine White is that she was in part responsible for turning the *New Yorker* from what was originally a funny magazine advertising itself as "not for the old lady from Dubuque" into something more original, more ambitious, more literary, with a point of view that was immediately recognizable and that became widely shared.

Because of her manner and New England accent, people sometimes mistook her for a Proper Bostonian, but the background of her family was western Massachusetts and Maine. Her father, Charles Sergeant, was orphaned at the age of seventeen. Like a character out of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, he went to work for a bank, then for a railroad, taught himself engineering and ended up vice-president of the Boston Elevated Railway Company. Her mother died of a ruptured appendix when Katharine was six years old and Katharine had almost no memory of her and no conscious sense of loss. By her own account her childhood was happy. She was a prim little girl, educated at home until the seventh grade when, five days a week, she boarded a street-car that carried her in to Boston and the Winsor School. Like her two older sisters she was then enrolled in Bryn Mawr, which was small, the most bluestocking of the American colleges for women and ardently feminist. In her senior year Katharine was editor of the school magazine and the literary annual, and managed to wheedle a contribution out of Marianne Moore, who was an alumna. She graduated fourth in a class of seventy-nine.

A year out of college she married Ernest

Angell, whom she had known since childhood. Their first home was Cleveland, Ohio, where he had been taken into his father's law firm. From the very beginning she had a job of one sort or another—reading scripts for the Cleveland Play House; conducting a door-to-door survey in the worst slums of Cleveland of the crippled and handicapped, with a view to finding work for them; representing the Consumer's League at legislative hearings on working conditions in factories. When Angell was appointed to represent Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the Senate investigation of the American occupation of those two countries she went to the islands with him and wrote articles, which the *New Republic* printed, on political and social conditions there. She also reviewed for the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Angell soon discovered that he had a taste for philandering. His infidelity could not be kept secret and the happiness of their first years together gave way to furious quarrelling.

In the summer of 1925, six months after its first issue, the *New Yorker* was struggling to stay alive. Katharine was taken on as a part-time manuscript reader at a weekly salary of twenty-five dollars. Two weeks later she was working full time and within three months she was, as she described it, "doing everything"—with, of course, Harold Ross, the editor-in-chief, and the other editors of that period. She was thirty-one years old, she was well read, she had an eye for literary talent in its first stages, she recognized genuine humour when she saw it. She was, in short, a godsend.

E. B. White had been submitting light verse and short prose pieces to the magazine and Katharine suggested to Ross that he be hired as a staff writer. Working together day after day they fell in love. They met in Europe in the summer of 1928, had a brief affair in the south of France and Corsica, and agreed not to continue it. She went to Reno to get a divorce. White was seven years younger than she was, and afraid of all binding arrangements, includ-

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The Macmillan Press Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS.

ing marriage. She was never in any doubt about her feelings for him and in the end, Linda H. Davis says, "they drove to a suburb of Manhattan where . . . they were married by a minister in the Presbyterian church in the village green. . . . The church was decorated with autumn leaves left over from a funeral."

White had become the *New Yorker's* most valuable contributor and although Ross offered him every inducement to stay, in 1938 he gave up writing the "Notes and Comment" pages in favour of a monthly column for *Harper's Magazine*. The couple bought an old farmhouse in Maine with thirty-six acres of land and a view over the water of Mount Desert Island. Katharine was much missed in New York literary circles — as Janet Flanner said crossly, "She is the best woman editor in the world, had the best editor's job in the world, and what does she do, leave it all and retire to a farm in Maine."

Linda H. Davis never met Mrs White, who had died a few months before Miss Davis began her biography; she had outlived most of the writers and artists whose work passed over her desk. Davis did get the approval and encouragement of White, and Mrs White's son and daughter by her first marriage were unusually candid in talking about their mother, but the *New Yorker* declined to open its files to her.

To a persistent biographer the grave is not invariably an insurmountable object. But

again and again Davis brings up a subject of interest and then lets go of it with "Whether this happened is not known" or "It is unknown if . . ." when the facts in question are known and she failed to ask the right person about them. Tense relationships such as the one with her sister Elsie, who also led a literary life, and with G. S. Lohano, the editor whom Katharine White selected and trained to succeed her when she went to live in Maine and whose decisions she could not always bring herself to abide by, are neither understood nor sufficiently gone into. Sometimes she fails to notice what is right under her nose. Mrs White frequently said, and no doubt believed, that her family was being pushed to the wall by medical expenses, which were indeed large. However, the royalties from White's two immensely popular books for children, *Smart Little and Charlotte's Web*, must have been considerable, year in and year out. And in the *New Yorker's* annual statement Mrs White is listed among no more than a handful of major stockholders.

Katharine White is not always perceived admiringly. Davis is aware of a certain nobility in her character that led to uneasy justifications of things in the past that she felt guilty about. On the other hand, nowhere is the reader given a glimpse of how charming she could be. Although she loved her son by White and her two Angell children, Davis believes that she was awkward when it came to nurturing them. Yet "maternal" is the word that best

describes her concern for the work and lives of writers and artists. They found themselves confiding in her. When they turned work in, they felt she was on their side, and in fact she was. Of the two kinds of editors, the no-sayers and the yes-sayers, she was a yes-sayer, and if possible would find a way to save a manuscript that was almost but not quite right. She did not take kindly to some of the things Brendon Gill wrote about her in *Here at "The New Yorker"* but his summing up of her qualities as an editor is entirely accurate:

militantly proud (as the Bryn Mawr graduates of those days especially were) of her fitness to take part in matters of importance in the world, she . . . had not only a superb confidence in herself and in her eye for quality; she was stubborn . . . in pushing for the acceptance of her opinion in some weighty literary working way down a narrow Alpine pass. She must often have intimidated Ross . . . she certainly gave him much ammunition to an intellectual conscience. . . . Always a resourceful opponent, when she was not the glacial, she was the narrow Alpine pass.

Davis is more assured when dealing with family history and with the Whites' preoccupation with illness, which went far beyond the garden variety of hypochondria. White told the of Alzheimer's at the end of a very long life but more often than not it turned out that he did not have the disease he was sure he was suffering from. Even a partial list of Katharine's afflictions is appalling: a spinal-fusion

operation, infectious hepatitis, mumps, an emergency appendectomy, diabetes, a blocked carotid artery that required surgery, after which she went into shock and nearly died in the operating room. Roger Angell thought that his mother and White engaged in an unconscious contest over which of them was the more ill. Miss Davis says.

Sharing his ill health unconsciously served several purposes. To begin with it helped her marriage. Her husband's devotion to her was unquestionable, but he was also devoted to his symptoms, and this mentally took him away from her. By sharing his anxieties she could remain emotionally close to him, participate more fully in his life.

As they went from doctor to doctor her condition was aggravated by misdiagnosis and the side effects of dangerous medication.

Confined to a wheel-chair or the living-room sofa, she refused to give in to old age, and is a gallant and touching figure — arranging and annotating her books and papers for the Bryn Mawr library, answering her mail and even some of White's, writing letters to her senator and congressman; failing eyesight had obliged her to use a magnifying glass in order to read and she found it impossible to hold the magnifying glass and a pen in her hand at the same time. After her death White wandered disconsolately about the place, seeing what needed to be done but, without her, lacking the will to do it.

put up at the Hôtel Jacob. This is the kind of in-joke in which Hemingway delighted. But it was also part of his constant need to heighten experience. The story-teller was also an inveterate liar. The Hemingway myth was a tissue of collaborative lies. Above all, stories about his wounding at Fossalta — indeed, his whole role in the Italian campaign — became distorted out of all proportion until it was widely believed that he had joined the 69th Infantry, fought three major battles and been badly wounded leading Arditi on Monte Grappa. This was as outrageous as the later fib about his D-Day landing on the Fox Green Beach sector of Omaha Beach. (Lynn shows that Hemingway did not reach Normandy "for a good month and a half after the June 6 landings.")

Not everything was phony. His secret anxieties also granted Hemingway the insight to delve into others' secrets, or imagined secrets, or sexual shortcomings. But this mainly brought out his worst side, stimulating his competitive masculinity (*passion*) or antisemitism (with Stein, Harold Loeb, Horace Livengood). His dislike of feeling indebted slipped into so inexcusable need to humiliate his friends. His malice became notorious, especially to those who had most helped to further his literary career: Sherwood Anderson, Scott Fitzgerald, Stein, even John Dos Passos. Though he admired T.S. Eliot's poetry, this did not prevent him from resenting the man, as is made abundantly clear by "Mr. and Mrs. Eliot" (the misspelling was habitual).

By the mid-1940s Hemingway was tormented, drunk, debilitated, afflicted with prolonged bouts of sexual impotence and skin cancer. Again and again he managed to rein in his resources. He finished *The Old Man and the Sea*, which won him a Pulitzer Prize, followed by the Nobel Prize. Heroically he struggled against his nightmares. For he had long been haunted by suicide. That is another theme Lynn tactfully traces through this long biography. If *The Garden of Eden* corroborated one aspect of his researches, he himself had set out to corroborate Norman Mailer's obituary piece in *Esquire*: "What is more likely the truth of his own odyssey", Mailer wrote,

is that he struggled with his cowardice and against a secret lust to suicide all his life, that his inner landscape was a nightmare, and he spent his nights wrestling with the gods. It may even be that the final judgment on his work may come to the notion that what he failed to do was tragic, but what he accomplished was heroic, for it is possible that he carried a weight of anxiety with him which would have suffocated any man smaller than himself.

That could well stand as epigraph to this accomplished, revealing and, all in all, profoundly sympathetic biography.

Celebrations in a house of fiction

Gabriel Josipovici

GEORGES PEREC
Life: A User's Manual
Translated by David Bellos
581pp, Collins Harvill. £15 (paperback, 95.95).
000274639
OULIPO
La Bibliothèque Oulipienne
Volume One: 375pp.
Volume Two: 391pp.
Paris: Ramsay. 125fr each

As with most major artists there is an exemplary quality about the life of Georges Perec: the contingent and the arbitrary have been transmuted into the resonant and meaningful. He was born in France in 1936 of immigrant Polish Jewish parents and was an orphan by the age of six, his father killed in 1940 fighting for his adopted country and his mother deported by the Nazis in 1943. Brought up by an aunt, he became in some ways more French than the French, as evidenced by the chord his first, rather modest novel, *Les Choses* (1965) seemed to strike in the public and critics alike. But after two further novels, one in the manner of Raymond Queneau and the other in that of the young Sartre, he found himself at a dead end, unable to see any way forward. It was at this point, in 1967, that he was invited to join OULIPO, and it changed his life. Suddenly he had a purpose, and his art blossomed. Its finest fruit, and what seems to me likely to remain one of the great novels of the century, was *La Vie mode d'emploi*, written between 1969 and 1978. He died of cancer in 1982, just short of his forty-sixth birthday.

What then is OULIPO and why was it so important to Perec? Four volumes of Oulipian writings have so far been published, including manifestos, exercises, and tributes to two of the members who died, Queneau and Perec. It is thus possible for an outsider to grasp something of what it stands for. The group was founded in 1961 by the mathematician François Le Lionnais and by Queneau, himself a mathematician and the editor of the *Pléiade* Encyclopaedia as well as a novelist and poet. The abbreviation stands for "Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle", and other members have included the poet, novelist (and mathematician) Jacques Roubaud, Italo Calvino and the American writer Harry Mathews. The group's aims: to explore the history of the use of constraints in literature (littérature, acrostics, palindromes, sestinas, etc) and thus in the process rehabilitate artists and periods dismissed by a literary history still dominated by mimetic and expressionist models; and (the more important task) to devise new constraints for poets and writers of fiction alike, and see what results from their rigorous application.

What is immediately striking about OULIPO, and perhaps explains its longevity, is its good humour. It is not, like most artistic movements, embattled; besides, the presence in its midst of the likes of Queneau and Perec has ensured that the emphasis would fall on wit and enjoyment rather than on polemics. One of the pieces reprinted in Volume One of the *Bibliothèque Oulipienne* is the outcome of a visit to Lyon made by several members of the group at the invitation of a local bookshop. Bored by the long motorway journey and rendered hopelessly drowsy by a light meal of *hors-d'oeuvres*, ham and cream cheese, washed down with a pleasing variety of local wines, and someone having mentioned the singer Montserrat Caballé, there descended on the company what Perec in his preface calls a "dévotion homophonique", which did not abandon them all long after they had reached Lyon, much to the bewilderment of their hosts, who had hoped to hear them talk about Art. One hundred homophonous variants on the singer's name are printed here (under the title "La cantatrice aveugle"), ranging from "Un fâs exotique entré un jour dans la librairie Maspero en criant: 'MAO SERRA ECRABOUILLE!'" to "La mère chatte devina que son petit avait commencé à manger un rongeur dont la chair était bien trop corrodée pour son encore jeune organisme: 'MONTRE CE RAT QU'AVA- LAISI!'"

There are two aspects of OULIPO which need to be grasped, one obvious and superficial, the other never alluded to by its members but always present at a deeper level. The first is that it turns all art into a game. There is nothing wrong with this, but those who believe that art consists of more than play will tend to dismiss it as merely frivolous. That would be a pity, because at the heart of OULIPO's endeavours lies the central post-Romantic issue of the meaning of art and its place in society, and the related problem of the arbitrariness of the artistic process and the sorts of measures the artist can take to overcome it. That is the question which drives both Proust and Eliot, both Marcel and Proust, both Leverkühn and Thomas Mann. Indeed, what else is *Doktor Faustus* but at once a meditation on the nature of artistic constraints, and an embodiment of such constraints in the manner of Schoenberg's serialism (itself the product of a search for strong enough constraints to allow the honest composer to work again in the wake of the chaos left by Beethoven and Wagner)? And to those who argue that to concentrate on purely formal matters is to deny the personality of the artist, two replies are necessary: the first and obvious one is that we have no difficulty in distinguishing Schoenberg from Berg, early Boulez from early Stockhausen, or Queneau from Calvino and both from Perec. The second and more interesting one is that it is precisely those who imagine that they need only rely on their personal genius and inspiration who produce works which very quickly turn out to resemble all the other works in their culture. Here of course the criticism of inspiration and individuality implicit in the OULIPO project joins hands with that of their more solemn and polemical contemporaries, Barthes, Foucault and Derrida.

There is nevertheless a modicum of truth in the criticism that might be levelled at OULIPO procedures and at those of their forebears, such as Raymond Roussel. Literature is not music and poetry is not prose fiction. Too often the result of imposing conscious playful constraints on narrative is the production of a text which is both fantastic and whimsical. As we read Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (Calvino has an essay in the second Oulipian volume on the constraints he employed in writing parts of that book) or Harry Mathews's *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*, we may be amused but we quickly cease to feel any compelling reason to read on. The author may be exceedingly clever but neither the characters nor the narrative ever really engages our interest. To some extent this is true of Perec's first Oulipian work, *La Disparition*, a long novel written entirely without the letter c, a task even harder in French than it is in English. One can admire it, laugh with it, but only as one admires and laughs at a juggler. However, for Perec himself the book was of the utmost importance, for it showed him that, at a moment when he thought he had nothing more to say, the fiercest of constraints opened up a whole new world of possibilities: the adrenalin and the invention started to flow again. And there is a further point, made (after his death) by Robert Bober, the film-maker who worked with Perec on *Return to Ellis Island*, that this, like all his later books, was an attempt, hardly realized even by himself, to come to terms with a real-life disappearance: that of his mother, deported to the camps when he was still too young to understand at a conscious level what was going on.

La Vie mode d'emploi is something completely different. To move from one of Perec's earlier novels to this one is like moving from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to *Ulysses*, from "Proust" to *The Waste Land*. It began as three separate projects. One was a novel based on a drawing by Saul Steinberg, showing a large apartment block with the front missing: it would be a celebration of the ordinary, of hot-water bottles, sleeping cats, cards pinned on walls, all those things which mean so much to us but which, overlooked, are not on the wall with the story, overlooked. One was a novel whose constraints would be dictated by the novel whose constraints would be dictated by the Graeco-Latin magic square of ten (such squares, like the simple one depicted in Dürer's "Melancholia I", are simply aids to permutational processes, and as such have been used, for example, by the composer Peter Maxwell Davies). And the third was the story of a millionaire who would plan a life for himself which

would be at once totally absorbing and completely useless. Suddenly Perec realized that these three were really one single project: the magic square would be the building with its hundred rooms; and in the building would live Perec's Bartlebooth, an English millionaire, who, at the age of twenty-five, decides to spend the next fifty years of his life in the following way: for ten years he takes lessons in water-colour painting (from Valenc, who lives in a bed-sitter at the top of the building); for twenty years he and his manservant travel the globe, while he paints watercolours of ports and seaside towns at the rate of one a fortnight, sending them back as they are completed to Gaspard Winckler, whom he has installed in the building, and whose task it is to turn them into wooden jigsaw puzzles of seven hundred and fifty pieces each; the next twenty years will be spent in his flat, reconstituting the puzzles, also at the rate of one a fortnight, and, as each is finished, dispatching them to another craftsman, who has the job of detaching the original watercolour from the completed puzzle; this is then sent back to the spot where it was painted and a chemical solution is applied to it which removes the paint; the pristine sheet of Whatman paper is then returned to Bartlebooth.

Each chapter consists of the description of a single room. Sometimes an object lends itself to an account of the occupant of the room or some other anecdote connected with it, and sometimes an earlier occupant is invoked. The tone remains neutral throughout, whether an elaborate piece of furniture is being described or a story of triple murder, suicide or accidental death is being recounted. Since it would be tedious to start at the top right hand corner and work across and down, Perec has devised a further set of rules for the transition from room to room and chapter to chapter, but devised it so cunningly that the last chapter brings us to the room in which sits Bartlebooth himself, bent over his jigsaw, and to the single shocking event which actually occurs in the course of this huge novel, an event, though, which has been prepared for from the very opening chapter.

The neutral tone and the abrupt transitions from room to room, life to life, far from flattening out character, enhance it, in line with the good Brechtian principle that interruption reveals far more than continuity. Our experience of the novel is in some ways akin to our experience of a great stained-glass window, at Chartres, say, or Canterbury: we are overwhelmed by colour and detail, yet we bask in the assurance that though we cannot quite make out all that is going on there are excellent reasons for every element being just as and where it is. That is why the effect of Perec's book is in some ways closer to that of the great medieval encyclopaedic narratives of Dante and Chaucer than to that of the anxious masterpieces of Sterne and Joyce.

And yet of course it is a book very much of our own time, and what makes it, in the end, a

great book rather than a merely brilliant one, is that it is a book about failure. Bartlebooth's attempt to find a use for his life ends in failure and despair, and the same is true of Winckler, Morelet, Appenzell, and of many others. Life cannot be used. As each finds age creeping up on him or is struck down by a blow from life — the death of a beloved wife, the discovery that talent does not match up to ambitions — he withdraws deeper and deeper into silence. In this crowded book, so full of lives and objects and word-games that it makes Rabelais seem almost anaemic, what affects one in the end is the sense that the only important things cannot be said or described. And this is where the novel's subject-matter and its form come together so remarkably. For all those rules developed by Perec over the years with OULIPO are themselves ultimately seen, like Bartlebooth's project, to be merely ways of staving off the ultimate silence, the ultimate triumph of life (time, death) over the plans men have for using and mastering it. Yet — such is the paradox of art — it is only by the almost manic deployment of such rules that this can be made manifest. Thus the book is ultimately a celebration of life itself, that which can never be used or mastered.

Like all great works of art, it grows in relevance the longer it exists among us. It arrives in England with nice timing as we enter a third stretch of Thatcherite government. For at one level it is about the uneven contest between those who respect life and the limits it imposes on us, and those who are governed by nothing but naked greed to seek to enlarge the space they occupy at the expense of others, or to discover the secrets of others in order to use them. It begins with the arrival of an estate agent come to work out how best to modernize Winckler's flat now that the puzzle-maker is dead, and it ends with a television impresario trying to force Bartlebooth out of his anonymity. Always it is the users who triumph, and, among them, of course, is the reader, peering behind locked doors into the privacy of rooms and lives. But the reader is made to recognize his role and to see that no matter how much you know about a person, you never fully know that person; that no matter how many shares you acquire, time will not spare you. The terrible vision Valenc has of the entire block of which the building forms a part razed to the ground, not by nuclear holocaust (Perec would see such apocalypses too as forms of false consolation) but simply by the greed of acquisitive builders planning some monstrous profit-making dream city in which all our wishes would be immediately catered for, is one of the bleakest in modern literature, all the more so for forming part of a wonderfully tender and funny novel.

It is a novel that presents a mighty challenge to any translator, so full it is of puns, secret games, allusions to other works and other styles. David Bellos, who has written some

The hero's hidden wounds

Harold Beaver

KENNETH S. LYNN
Hemingway: His life and work
702pp, Simon and Schuster. £16.
0071654829

Peter Griffin's *Along with Youth: Hemingway, the early years* (reviewed in the TLS of August 1, 1986) carried the seal of family approval. Kenneth S. Lynn's magnificent biography is not so certified; nor is it likely to be. For relentlessly he minims the ease for the prosecution. His is a study of Philoestes-Hemingway, probing what Edmund Wilson called "the wound and the how", underlining the butch imagery which the author so tirelessly propagated. A letter written in 1934 to F. Scott Fitzgerald strikes the keynote:

We are all bitched from the start and you especially have to be hurt like hell before you can write seriously. But when you get the damned hurt use it — don't cheat with it. Be as faithful to it as a scientist.

The danger is that Hemingway will be regarded no longer as a major, or even minor, writer but as a psychological case-study. This is a danger that Lynn triumphantly surmounts. He never denies the ultimate heroism by which Hemingway survived his own debilitating inner conflicts. He never denigrates his genius. He has far too high a respect for the fine fiction that such heroism entailed, though its extent may seem far smaller today than at the time of Hemingway's death.

For Hemingway had a problem: he was terrified of self-exposure. That is why he could not complete the overtly autobiographical "Nick Adams" cycle and finished all his life from confronting his birthplace — Oak Park, Illinois — in either fact or fiction. It is also why he so deplored Fitzgerald's self-humiliating candour in essays later gathered under the title *The Crack-Up*. Not only was such candour taboo, but Hemingway's self-understanding was in any case too limited to permit him to be so expansive. This forced him to exercise the most severe economies in rendering his life artistically, "packing troubled feelings" below the surface of his stories (as Lynn writes) "like dynamite beneath a bridge". Lynn's self-appointed task has been to dismantle that bridge and defuse the dynamite. The publication of this biography follows inexorably on the publication of the abridged manuscript of *The Garden of Eden* (reviewed in the TLS of February 6, 1987). It is the homosexual and transsexual fantasies of that posthumous novel which are here fully illuminated and explored. Perhaps a sort of sexual vacillation is more the word, or androgyny, however odd it may



Hemingway in Spain to report the Spanish Civil War, carrying arms although it was illegal for reporters to do so. The photograph is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

seem to rediscover Hemingway as the prophet of our own bleached, unisex era. Certainly after *The Garden of Eden* it was impossible to ignore Hemingway's fascination with sexual transposition and hair fetishism and lesbianism and phallic kiss. As he recorded in 1953, annotating his fourth wife's diary:

She has always wanted to be a boy and thinks as a boy without ever losing any femininity. If you should become confused on this you should tell her. She loves me to be her girl [sic], which I love to be, not being absolutely stupid. . . . In return she makes me want and at night we do every sort of thing which pleases her and which pleases me. . . . Mary has never had one lesbian impulse but has always wanted to be a boy. Since I have never cared for any man and dislike any tactile contact with men except the sexual Spanish abuse. . . . I loved feeling the embrace of Mary which came to me as something quite new and outside all tribal law.

Lynn traces this theme through the centre without appearing a Freudian busybody. His interpretation of literary texts with biographical comment (that critical morass) is masterly. Hemingway's disgust was centred on the massive presence of his mother. It was Grace Hemingway who had dressed him in girls' clothes to make a twin sister of him for the

older Marcelline, converting them to a couple of "lads" or "chaps" for holidays. Grace's meticulous family photo-album is the damning evidence as well as the suspicion of lesbianism that hovered around her in later years. It is surely paradoxical that a Miss Stein was to replace "Mrs Hemingstein" (one of her son's antisemitic nicknames from his school days) in Hemingway's confused emotions. Only twenty months apart in age, both Hemingway and Gertrude Stein had ballooned to an enormous size. "As for Gertrude's attachment to Alice Toklas," Lynn writes, "Hemingway may have thought of it as a bold, Patsian variation on his mother's relationship with Ruth Arnold."

Hemingway would have detested all this probing into his family background. He might have been equally troubled to learn that the love between the impotent hero and his mistress, heroines of *The Sun Also Rises* could be interpreted as a lesbian relationship. With an ingenious twist, Lynn further decodes that already celebrated *roman à clef* by associating the hero's name ("I say, Barnes! Jacob Barnes!") with two notorious lesbians on the Paris scene: Natalie Barney who lived at 20 rue Jacob and Diana Barnes who had originally

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O P T I M A

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remarkably illuminating essays on the book, and the publishers, are to be congratulated on at long last making it available in English (German and Italian translations came out five years ago). How sad then to have to say that the book has been translated and edited extremely carefully.

To begin with, key decisions have not been taken. Some book titles and quotations (or mock-quotations) have been translated or given English equivalents, while others have been left in French. On page 166 one of the many mock-reproductions in the book shows an advert for an infla-rubber; Bellis has cleverly substituted the name "Kansell" for Peree's "Héphas", but then has ruined it by giving the address of the shop as "85 Dame Street, Brussels". The French has "rue de Dames, Bruxelles", which is what we would expect; surely if you are going to anglicize the name of the product and the street, though, you need to alter the location to an English town. This might seem a trivial objection, but hundreds of such details combine to give the impression of something slightly clumsy and unfocused, which is the precise opposite of the effect of the book in French. And could not someone at Collins have noted that there is no such church as Santa Maria Maggiore, or asked the translator to look again at the French on page 186, where the English reads, incongruously: "In the middle, beneath a chandelier with an opaline bowl hanging on three gilded cast-iron chains, stands a table made of a cylindrical block of lava from Pompeii, on which sits a six-sided smoked glass table laden with little saucers . . ."? By contrast chapters twenty-seven and seventy-four, which were translated by Harry Matthews and had already been published, read as though Peree had written in English. Let us hope the book will be enough of a success even as it stands for the publishers to commission Bellis to make a thorough revision. Peree deserves no less.

A monster traduced

Nicole Irving

MICHEL TOURNIER
Gilles and Jeanne
Translated by Alan Sheridan
226pp. Methuen £9.95
0143416601

In retelling the story of Jeanne d'Arc and her companion at arms, Gilles de Rais, Michel Tournier aims to fill in the blanks left in more circumstantial accounts – religious texts and histories. His *Gilles et Jeanne* (first published in 1983, and reviewed at length in the *TLS* of August 19 that year) is a shocking little book. It seems unclassifiable in a hurry to dispose of Jeanne d'Arc in order to get on to the story of Gilles's ghastly doings in the years following Jeanne's death at the stake. This brief *reclé* leaves us feeling cheated and disturbed: with its tone of cold detachment, quite unlike that of *Le Roi des Aulnes* or *Vendredi ou les corps du Pacifique*, it makes voyeurs of us.

Alan Sheridan's translation contributes little to the cause, for sadly it manages to mangle many of the characteristic Tournier qualities – the winning confidence and sheer pleasure with which he writes, for example – that make the French book difficult to discard. The translation all too often takes the easy way out, simplifying the language and making it dull.

There are frequent, minor inaccuracies which point to this perhaps having been a rushed job ("Je t'ai out dire" becoming "I've heard it said", which fails to convey the devoted attention Gilles paid to Jeanne's every word or gesture). However unimportant some of these may seem, there is good reason to

preserve each scrap of meaning wherever possible in a narrative that is brief, that charts Gilles's growing obsession, and that rarely does the reader's work for him, preferring to give an accumulation of small, worrying hints rather than spell anything out. It is a pity, for example, to give away the young page-boy's sex in the opening pages when Tournier so carefully withholds it. His sentence without subject or verb, "Des yeux verts . . . un visage osseux . . ." becomes "She had bright green eyes, a bony face . . .". (In Tournier's vision of the future monster, sadist and boy murderer, is not the ambiguity of Jeanne's sex perhaps crucial in drawing Gilles towards her?) But there are more disastrous moments too, where what appears to be a failure to come to grips with the French has led to an English rendering which might not to have stood up to an editor's scrutiny. Tournier writes, at the moment of Jeanne's arrival among courtiers at Chinon: "En verité cet être-là vient d'ailleurs et jure au milieu des courtisanes, comme un jeune lion parmi les dindons, les paons et les pintades d'une basse-cour." This cannot be made to mean: "In truth she was a creature from elsewhere. Standing in the midst of those courtiers, she swore like a farmhand surrounded by turkeys, peacocks and guinea fowls." There is no need for Jeanne to swear, and it would be out of character; she merely stands out – for *իրer* can mean to elash or to jar – like a young fawn amid the turkeys, peacocks and guinea-fowl of a farmyard. Far from seeing Jeanne as a crude farmhand, Tournier is playing on the terms *cour*, court, and *basse-cour*, farmyard; it is the Dauphin's court that is the cackling, self-regarding farmyard in which this fresh, untainted creature has the misfortune to arrive.

Backwaters tale

Patricia Craig

WILLIAM TREVOR
Nights at the Alexandra
71pp. Century Hutchinson. £7.95.
009 1684609

Neither the mood nor the theme of this Hutchinson novella will be unfamiliar to readers of Irish, or Anglo-Irish, fiction, in the line from Elizabeth Bowen to John McGahern and William Trevor himself. Trevor is celebrated for, among other things, his ability to evoke the greyness and lassitude of provincial Ireland, an ability that finds a further outlet in *Nights at the Alexandra*. The story, not at all original in its outlines, concerns the impact on a rather colourless local schoolboy of a foreign couple who establish themselves in a big house just outside the town.

The foreigners are Herr Messinger and his English wife, but it's Harry, the schoolboy, who acts as a messenger for the English woman, enthralled by her beauty and by the details of her life, an itinerant life as the child of a "poor relation": the crimson velvet dress she wore at fifteen, a romantic experience she'd had in a meadow full of poppies. It's a far cry from the dingy town, the rectory where Harry boards during term time, his school companions with their crassness and their quirks, his somewhat nerdy family life. The boy at odds with his philistine father: this is a characteristic Trevor creation, and here it is treated in a characteristically way – humorously, in the lowest possible key. That Jacob's invented the cream cracker was one of my father's greatly favoured mealtime statements.

The narrator's irony is an effect of his withdrawn state; like the hero of Elizabeth Bowen's "Ivy Grippled the Steps", Harry has had his "family" for emotional fulfilment adversely affected by the brevity and intensity

Foils fair and foul

Simon Rae

SEBASTIAN BARRY
The Engine of Owl-Light
390pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £10.95.
085635 7049

Sebastian Barry is an exuberant exponent of the power and possibilities of language, delighting in "the twistings and convolutions of words, the inventions and contrivances", as Dylan Thomas, clearly an influence along with more obvious Irish mentors, once expressed it. Barry's strenuously animated use of language is constantly throwing up striking images, ingenious descriptions: "the little ferry tweezers the bruised handful of passengers from one bank to the other"; "sometimes a depressed afternoon husband forced his steps to her shilling edge of town"; "the house was under a linen of dust"; "We never heard another word about that death, till later. Probably the old woman boiled and bubbled and dried, and stopped stinking, and became a sort of leather cover to the lonely armchair."

Of course this kind of thing can get badly out of hand (one thinks despondently of Wilson Harris), but Barry is a disciplined practitioner, seldom overloading the intricate circuitry of his prose. He also displays skill and a certain amount of daring in the structure of this book, which contains six distinct narrative strands woven in the same order or pattern into twenty chapters (or "sixfoils"), each of which develops another stage of every story. The effect at first is of an evening's channel-hopping at someone else's peremptory behest, but once the rhythm of the sequence has been established one reads easily and avidly.

The bulk of the novel is devoted to the lives of two utterly dissimilar Irishmen, Oliver Conn, bright, middle-class, but bereft of a father, and Batty Moran, a Beckett figure from the extreme margins, born in the poor-house, brought up by the town whore and conscripted to fight in a nonsensical war in Africa.

Oliver's account of himself is split into three, each with its different tone and style: memories

of childhood and the gradual exploration of the central trauma of his life, the early departure of his renegade artist father; the story of an unhappy affair with the sexually ravishing but emotionally frigid Xenia, in Paris and Switzerland; and a travelogue covering a much warmer relationship with a girl called Sue, with whom he drives across the States in a stolen car in the company of a shady drifter called Chicken.

Moran's tale is told in a third-person account of his early up-bringing – or out-casting – and terrible experiences in the army, through which, paradoxically, he is resurrected into a fuller humanness; and a first-person narrative, addressed to an unknown "Moll", from the dubious sanctuary of Key West, where he has fallen in with a Rasta called Ali. They hangout in a topless bar and pursue some clandestine and illegal venture, the nature of which remains obscure, though it involves the theft of some manuscripts, one of them bearing the title *The Engine of Owl-Light*.

These two biographical sequences, which dovetail hesitantly towards the end of the book, are underpinned by a sixth narrative strand, also incidentally addressed to "Moll", written in "foul" English and purporting to be the history of an early Irish chief who also happens to be called Conn. This phonetic mish-mosh – "Eetseed a lutel sturn hadde riss, and in de cinter oft dat villog stooled de teeny boi, of years in handefil" – makes for rocky reading, but is worth persisting with. It tells a story similar to that of the legendary Sweeney (the son-in-law incidentally of a Conn) involving the chief's losing battle with a trinitarian cleric, a hard exile, a forlorn return and a terrible torturing from which he escapes into the woods to be re-united with, indeed transformed into, his old court poet, Owl.

How this ancient story parallels, complements or illuminates the modern narratives, how, to quote the epigraph from Sir Thomas Browne, "things long past have been answered by things present", must be left to the reader to tease out for himself. But whatever may be made of the novel's depths, anyone would be struck by the energy and brilliance of its surface.

Backwaters tale

Patricia Craig

WILLIAM TREVOR
Nights at the Alexandra
71pp. Century Hutchinson. £7.95.
009 1684609

Neither the mood nor the theme of this Hutchinson novella will be unfamiliar to readers of Irish, or Anglo-Irish, fiction, in the line from Elizabeth Bowen to John McGahern and William Trevor himself. Trevor is celebrated for, among other things, his ability to evoke the greyness and lassitude of provincial Ireland, an ability that finds a further outlet in *Nights at the Alexandra*. The story, not at all original in its outlines, concerns the impact on a rather colourless local schoolboy of a foreign couple who establish themselves in a big house just outside the town.

The foreigners are Herr Messinger and his English wife, but it's Harry, the schoolboy, who acts as a messenger for the English woman, enthralled by her beauty and by the details of her life, an itinerant life as the child of a "poor relation": the crimson velvet dress she wore at fifteen, a romantic experience she'd had in a meadow full of poppies. It's a far cry from the dingy town, the rectory where Harry boards during term time, his school companions with their crassness and their quirks, his somewhat nerdy family life. The boy at odds with his philistine father: this is a characteristic Trevor creation, and here it is treated in a characteristically way – humorously, in the lowest possible key. That Jacob's invented the cream cracker was one of my father's greatly favoured mealtime statements.

The narrator's irony is an effect of his withdrawn state; like the hero of Elizabeth Bowen's "Ivy Grippled the Steps", Harry has had his "family" for emotional fulfilment adversely affected by the brevity and intensity

of a childhood association. What happens? A cinema, the Alexandra, is established in the Irish town by the foreigners grateful for the sanctuary it afforded them (Hitler's war is in progress). Harry, in the course of time, inherits the cinema and sees it through prosperity and decline. In the opening line of the novella he describes himself as a fifty-eight-year-old provincial. The story is recounted in retrospect.

William Trevor isn't breaking new ground here, but offering instead an extremely graceful exercise in an expected mode, with all the sharpness and tautness one could wish for, and with the melancholy of an Irish backwater, on a wet day in October, pervading the prose.

Crime file

REGINALD HILL
Child's Play
296pp. Collins. £8.95.
0 00 23262 4

Gwendoline Huby's will doesn't endear the departed to her relatives, for it leaves her money – a cool million and a half – first to her son, missing in action in 1944, and then, if he hasn't claimed it by April 2015, to charity. The repercussions dump several pleasant little problems into the laps of one of the favourite Yorkshire policemen: Superintendent Andy Dalziel and Inspector Peter Pascoe. Reginald Hill has given himself more elbow-room than usual, giving the space not only to produce a more complicated weave, but also to bulk out secondary characters, giving the book a satisfyingly thick texture. At the same time the basic detective story virtues – plot, suspense, interest – are far from neglected. And there's a nice sense of humour there, too.

T. J. Binyon

Back from the soil

Tom Aitken

MAURICE GEE
Prowlers
236pp. Faber. £10.95.
0571 148115

The retirement of Sir Noel Papps, eighty-three, soil scientist, benefactor of New Zealand's farmers, is disturbed when his great-niece Kate questions him about his deceased sister Kitty, a successful politician. He is unwilling to help, disliking Kate and fearing that her feminist views and hero-worship of Kitty will falsify the biography she proposes. The past is frightening, and nobody's business but his own. Nasty things lie under surfaces. But "tension is a well known provider of balance". Allowing Kate house-room, he prowls compulsively through his past, composing the notebooks which make up this novel. Deploping Kate's interest in personal life as mere gossip, he attempts a literal, chronological account, but, after a lifetime of peering through lenses, asserting control over matter by precise nomenclature, he is now confronted with personalities and events which resist objective definition, and reluctantly constructs an honest, disturbing picture of his own life and the lives and deaths of those closest to him.

Reach for the stars

Frederic Raphael

CLIVE JAMES
The Remake
223pp. Cape. £10.95.
0204 025155

It argues a certain courage, not to say boldness, for a critic to expose himself to criticism: who throws all his stones and then moves into a glass house? Clive James asks a good deal if he hopes to be treated as just another novelist, especially since his art is scarcely the kind that conceals James. As soon as he holds a mirror up to nature, his own Addisonian adipose figure looms into frame, although he has forsown all self-referential shows of post-modernism. The disavowal of clever stunts – "no game of spot the author, no alternative endings, no putting the middle first" – is just one more clever stunt. The first-person narrator, who thus allows the Clive James to be an also-jogged in his own caucus race, is called Joel Court, an only fairly fat Aussie whose misadventures among the stars, in both the celestial and the terrestrial senses, are the pre-text for a narrative no more pretentious than the use of epigraphs from Einstein, Calvino, Dürrenmatt, Mishima, Borges and G. M. Hopkins ("look at the stars", what else?).

Joel is a mini-celebrity, except around the wals, ranking above the Weather Man but well below Everidge. He is a Patrick Moore-the-merrier, a Cambridge-based academic astronomer with a common enough touch, who has made it on the box, although in difficulties over what to do as an encore. Success, even at this unstratospheric level, has sexual as well as financial rewards: the best of both worlds is his idea of heaven. His tough American wife, Lauren, has not heard about the elasticity of celebrity marriages, however, and gives him the boot when she hears about the kind of research his assistant, Gael, has encouraged him to do.

Unrepentant and abject by turns, Joel takes refuge under the dockland aegis of his role-model, Chance Jenolan, a super-Aussie who has all the chic and all the ebullience Joel would like (he also has a pad in Biarritz, where Joel winds up as a remittance-man-cum-care-taker). Jenolan has it made and, as the title suggests, can only try to make it again. For most of the time, he is an absentee presence, whose literary achievements and prestigious ambitions he is reckless enough to back his own motion picture – fill Joel with untold apprehension. For a capper, there is "the Mole", successful in Cardiff, Chance's house-pet, the feeding and watering of whom form part of Joel's duties. The Mole is a bright-as-a-button

His narrative reaches back to 1915 when he, Kitty and their schoolfellows Phil and Irene apprehended a fire-raiser (a story first told by Maurice Gee in a television serial for children, *The Fire-Faiser*, currently being shown on BBC1, and in a vividly exciting book just issued here by Puffin). The man with a fire in his head, neurotically villainous in that context, provides a springboard for more various portrayals in *Prowlers*, ranging from fiery Kitty, hurling kitchen-based metaphors at her parliamentary opponents, to Kate's irrational, violent boyfriend, Shane, whose mind at moments "goes kind of red". Although, according to Gee, this further exploration of his original characters took directions he hadn't foreseen, the four children identifiably prefigure the variously obsessive adults they – albeit with changed surmises – here become.

The relationship between Noel and Phil, once "the stink-bag from the docks", now a successful property speculator, continues as it began, in sterile, undeclared combat, culminating in a wager on who will live longer. Noel wins and the manner of Phil's death exemplifies his amoral, acquisitive, violent life. Noel himself has never recovered from his early crush on Irene (mayor's daughter, locally admired pianist and rumoured sexual partner of her father and brother), even after marriage and a joyous affair, lightly but warmly evoked.

with a liberated Dutchwoman. Sister Kitty, clever, gauche, becomes a bawdy populist saint. As Minister of Health she waves a stethoscope and proclaims, "They use these things to listen to their money in the bank." Even her manner of drinking tea is a blow struck in the class war. But how exactly did her ineffectual husband die? Noel has no suspicions. It is Kate who reluctantly uncovers the truth.

Half-way through the novel, in an agonizing passage which draws together the threads and sets the book on course for its conclusion, Kate drags from Noel the reason for his wife Rene's insanity (a premarital affair with Phil which Noel could not help her forget). Faced with the "malice" and "squalor" of the sane, he yearns for her "long clear open gaze", is surprised that more people don't follow her path into madness ("We must have minds made of leather") and finds his sense of himself crumbling. "At work I was Doctor Papps . . . Outside I was a man doing his best." He takes refuge in amateur acting.

Other people are similarly elusive. One, he notes in surprise, is "not a person to be categorized. His dimensions shift as you watch." His version of the past, he finally accepts, must stand as an approximation. Memory calls up "num and void, a multitude of bodies rolling

about and damaging each other when they come close".

Nevertheless, at the novel's end, with Kate busy at the typewriter, he sees some limited value in what he has been made to do ("There are no revelations. There's a filling in of gaps"), despite his asking her to burn his notebooks.

Gee can sketch a scene luminously and accommodate poetic imagery in prose narrative. He can show Sir Noel in farcical predicaments – hanging from a tree, being attacked in the croch by Irene's dog; collapsing with cramp at his investiture – while allowing him essential dignity. He can move effortlessly between low and high comedy, cheerful eroticism and scrupulously unsentimental pathos. He constructs a complex but lucid thematic pattern of interlocking opposites: sterility and fertility; lust and love; kindness and cruelty; intellectual rigour and comfortable pragmatism. In his best-known novel, *Plumb*, Gee portrayed a man whose rigorous conscience disrupts his career and family life. Sir Noel's attempted rigour, by contrast, is constantly subverted, but his meanderings are given a firm sense of underlying direction. *Prowlers* is a brilliant, exact picture of local New Zealand life during three-quarters of a century and a compelling study of a mind forced into conflict with itself.

Ripper yarn

John Clute

IAN SINCLAIR
White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings
210pp. Goldmark. £12.50.
1870507 002

If there is a ghost that haunts the labyrinths at the heart of Iain Sinclair's first novel, it is not the ghost of Jack the Ripper. In the person of Sir William Withey Gull, a plausible version of the Ripper may blunder through East Anglia and Whitechapel, but the London he terrorizes is the creation of another. The London of *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* is a visionary re-creation of the city Charles Dickens brought into existence, that infested feverish Whore of Babylon soon to be submerged into the watery Babylon-on-Thames of Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Conan Doyle.

White Chappell begins with Doyle. In the late twentieth century a crew of second-hand book-dealers, which includes the narrator of the entire text in his most transparent of guises, comes across a unique copy of *A Study in Scarlet*, first published in 1888, which was the year of the Ripper. The narrator, who refers to himself as the Late Watson and also as Sinclair, begins immediately to generate an obsessive fever-dream quilt of reminiscence and speculation, in which images of the fog-bound East End of 1888 intersect with and invade the bare daylight cityscapes of our present age.

Much of the material from which Sinclair patches his text is given. His identification of Jack the Ripper seems more or less to be that of Stephen Knight, whose *Jack the Ripper: The final solution* (1976) remains the most deeply enjoyable of all theories yet propounded, though by no means the most likely. William Gull and his mentor James Hinton are figures of history, however transfigured here; as are the Ripper's victims; as are Hawksmoor (Peter Ackroyd credits Sinclair's *Lud Heat* of 1975 as a shaping influence on his recent novel) and (vide Ackroyd's most recent novel) Chatterton. Nor is Sinclair's depiction of the lives of second-hand book-dealers anything like as fantastical as it might seem. However exorbitant *White Chappell* may at times become, its flights are tied to a complex vision of the real.

At times, all the same, these flights are tangled beyond easy comprehension. In aping his protagonist's disoriented and epiphany-rich immurement in the gutter of London, Sinclair too frequently overloads a not remarkably powerful grasp of narrative syntax, and his quasi-Joycean rhythms consequently lose steam, become swayed back, and stall. The effect can be one of stifling obscurity. But almost always some new image of Dickensian force clears the air in the nick of time, and this version of the heart of the city beats once more.

NB

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

Nothing is more treacherously revealing of oneself than an attempt to write about the fortunes and talents of a younger generation. In fact, reviewing that last sentence, I would say that it sounded pretty damn middle-aged. But there is something wretchedly affecting about the fate of the successful young fiction-writers who have been launched and burnt out in the past two years. I am speaking of the group – it never had time to give itself anything more than the collective name of "brat pack" – that included Jay McInerney (*Bright Lights, Big City*), Tama Janowitz (*Slaves of New York*), Bret Easton Ellis (*Less than Zero*) and David Levitt (*Family Dancing*). These glib new productions were held to be important for their generational pulse no less than for their bawdy, candid attitude to sex, drugs, cruelty and the plate of big-city living. They were impressive, people said, for their "lack of affect" (a phrase often used in police reports on the mentality of fatal youth). Then trick lay in shocking while being mischievous, in presenting a faded but smart set of interestingly pale features to the cinema world.

In a review that proved ironic when later contrasted to his own case, Scott Fitzgerald wrote, in "Early Success" (1937), that:

The compensation of a very early success is a conviction that life is a romantic matter. In the first one or two days young writers are taken for granted and a shaky economy had lost its fascination. I had far more to write, years that I can't honestly regret, in seeking the eternal Carnival by the Sea.

But the "brat pack" did not even have this kind of experience to savour. In his introduction to a special issue of the *Mixmag* Review last summer (only last summer), which bore the title "These Young People Today", Levitt wrote as follows:

This year a reporter (one of many reporters) called a writer friend of mine to interview her for an article on the phenomenon of publishing young. Afterwards, the reporter thanked my friend, then hastily added: "Oh, please do include in X (another writer) for me. I wanted to include her, you see, but this article is on young writers, writers under thirty, and she's thirty-one." So it went in 1983, as ever which might be noted, among other things, for the coming of the term "brat pack" and the entry of "yuppie" into common language. Articles in newspapers, critical essays, anthologies abounded, celebrating and/or scrutinizing the phenomenon of being a young writer. The writers themselves got younger and

younger; when since the middle ages had thirty-one been old? I myself had the unfortunate distinction of being, that year, the very youngest, an experience akin to being posed naked on a bear (one, only to be depicted within six months (to my relief) by one younger than myself).

Mr. youth. It has a tendency – does it not? – to date the emergence of things by their occurrence in the lives of the young. The word "yuppie" emerged two whole years before 1985. And the phrase "brat pack" was coined to describe a group of tyro in Hollywood when Mr. Levitt was still mired in his twenties. If he had been aware of its Hollywood origins, he might have distrusted it on very first hearing.

In 1985 and 1986, a fruit-machine of rewards emptied itself over the pack. One had thought that there were no new forms of hype and instant celebrity to be mobilized, until one saw Tama Janowitz posed in a post-punk outfit and standing on the desk in Arthur Schlesinger's study. More amazing still, Schlesinger was seated pickishly in a chair beside her. The ensemble, or should I say juxtaposition, was an ad for Rose's Time Juice as well as for *The Cuckoo of American History* (first and a *Cumbal* in Manhattan (first).

With the publication of *A Cumbal* in Manhattan, and the arrival of the second novel by each member of the pack, there seems to have been a general critical agreement that enough was enough. The successful novels (*The Rules of Attraction* in the case of Ellis, *Ransom* by McInerney and *The Lost Language of Cranes* by Levitt) have all received contemporary reviews and, worse, have done abysmally at the box office. Janowitz and Ellis found themselves accused of self-indulgence in *Fanny Fair*. Levitt, who had the best claim to be a serious writer, may be suffering from a backlash against his chosen subject of homosexuality. But already one gets the feeling that the same melancholy that picked these people up has decided to spit them out. If, as some have suggested, these books were all along being bought by worried parents rather than by the illiterate young, the parents may have decided that they didn't need to buy the sequels. More probable is a swift access of cynicism by publishers, publicists and marketing types. There are, they must reason, plenty more brots where these came from.

Fitzgerald wrote in "Early Success" of the presses "pounding out *This Side of Paradise* like they pound out extras in the movies". He also wrote of reaching "a stage of manic depressive insanity. Rage and bliss alternated compliantly spoken to. That the two events should have broken up in the same way indicates the sense of grievance, even insult, occasioned as the loss of empire begins to bite. What is significant, however, is that the feeling of having been marginalized should seek redress in further marginalization, as if what was attractive about Britain's past was its Britishness rather than its self-sufficiency or its power to dictate terms. The object of the symposium was not, however, to discuss nationalism, but to explore definitions of Post-Modernism prompted by Academy Edition's publication of *Post-Modernism* by the architectural critic Charles Jencks. The definition which Jencks seems most comfortable with at the moment is that Post-Modernism is Nietzsche, Freud and Einstein but also Chomsky, Levi-Strauss and Foucault; that it accepts mass-production and mass culture but welcomes their modification by economic, regional and historical forces. "In every instance," says Jencks, "Post-Modernism is 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'." What ticks his critics is that this inclusiveness appears to give him a licence for critical ambiguity – a licence complicated by the fact that while Jencks could justifiably embrace ambiguity as a legitimate critical Post-Modern position, he denies that he does. Jencks's book subtles Post-Modernism as "The New Classicism (not Neo-Classicism, he insists) in Art and Architecture". In 1977, when his *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* first appeared, however, Jencks

hour by hour." It was at about this time that he wrote the line for which he was later mocked – "She was a faded but still lovely woman of twenty-seven." But he lived to write with wit and detachment of his experience with the success industry, and at a time when Scribner's was abundant at a sale of more than twenty thousand. Fifty years later, it is the novelists and not the novels which get pounded out like movie extras. At this rate, even the brief moment of bliss will have to be forgone, along with any semblance of a conviction that life is "a romantic matter".

On the other hand, I never expected to hear of R. Crumb again. This most nervous and brilliant of the 1960s cartoonists was last reported to be lost in a drug-sodden haze, ridden with debts and robbed even of his copyrights. Yet he turned up in mid-season form at the Gotham Book Mart last month, with a whole portfolio of fresh illustrations.

Those who don't recognize the name will still remember Fritz the Cat, Mr Natural and other key cultural signifiers of the period such as Honeybunch Kaminski, Angelhead McSpade, and the album covers of Janis Joplin. The motto "Keep on Truckin'" which certainly seemed to mean something at the time, is still to be found (alas, uncopied) on products all over the country. Crumb now divides his time between abstract painting, which has yielded a successful exhibition on the West Coast, and the illustration of less lurid comics than the *Zip* genre of which he was the principal ornament two decades ago. The only really original artist of the summer of love, he considers himself a semi-recluse but can still barely avoid a cult following. His illustrations of Edward Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* have helped keep that underground classic before a devoted public. Robert Hughes went so far, in *Time*, as to call Crumb "an American Hogarth; a moralist with a blown mind".

In our brief chat, the retiring Crumb complained that his work is being seized by the English customs, and that his London representatives, Knockout Comics, are being given a hard time by authorities. I should be interested to hear more about this if anyone has pertinent information. Other admirers who have lost touch may care to know that Crumb is now drug-free and has settled his epic dispute with the Internal Revenue.

Following on her illustrated tour of her husband's great *roman fleuve* (reviewed in last week's TLS) Violet Powell has collaborated with Anthony Powell in another venture – more modest but even more self-reflexive. It takes the form of a page of quotations which they have contributed to the new issue of *Nemo's Almanac* – an annual literary competition founded in 1892 and still commanding a small but fanatical following. The *Almanac* consists of twelve "months" – sets of related quotations from English and American literature, which have to be identified before September 1 of the following year. Hardened solvers have their techniques and networks of exchange; the unwary are tempted in by a few very easy items but then develop an obsessive need to trace the others, with the lure of prizes and special marks for the formidably hard final half-dozen. Themes this year include bishops, geography, files and circulating libraries; the Powell's page, of course, is all about people called Powell.

The Grand Inquisitor for the past seventeen years has been John Fuller; copies of *Nemo's Almanac* 1988 are available now from the new editor, Alan Hollinghurst, 25 Cantelows Road, London NW1 9XR, at £1.40, or £4.50 for four (US \$6 or \$15 for four, by airmail).

"Are you interested in books and writing about books?" This question, printed in large flamboyant script, appeared on an envelope addressed to the Editor of the TLS. It's good to know that the *London Review of Books*, the sender, maintains such a good sense of humour.

Letters

Monetary Policy and Economic Growth

Sir, – In his excellent review-article of September 25–October 1, Robert Skidelsky attributes to me the view "that unemployment would always be at its natural rate provided money was kept neutral". My actual claim for monetary policy was and is much more modest, as is clear from the following quotes from the 1967 article in which I introduced the concept of a "natural rate of unemployment".

1. "The 'market' rate [of unemployment] will vary from the natural rate for all sorts of reasons other than monetary policy."

2. "By setting itself a steady course and keeping to it, the monetary authority could make a major contribution to promoting economic stability. By making that course one of steady but moderate growth in the quantity of money, it would make a major contribution to avoidance of either inflation or deflation of prices. Other forces would still affect the economy, require change and adjustment, and disturb the even tenor of our ways. But steady monetary growth would provide a monetary climate favourable to the effective operation of those basic forces of enterprise, ingenuity, invention, hard work, and thrift that are the true springs of economic growth. That is the most that we can ask from monetary policy in our present stage of knowledge. But that much – and it is a great deal – is clearly within our reach."

I might add that, to the best of my recollection, I have never used the term "neutral money" or relied on the concept that it refers to.

MILTON FRIEDMAN.
Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace,
Stanford, California 94305.

Placing Oscar Wilde

Sir, – At least two of your readers seem to have trouble understanding what I wrote in my review of Richard Ellmann's *Oscar Wilde* (October 2–8). One quotes me to the effect that Ellmann "has not worked out that homosexuality is an adjective describing an act not a noun descriptive of a human being" (Letters, October 16–22). This particular fine reader seems to think that I disapprove of the common use of adjectives as nouns, eg. "academics". I don't. What I am saying is that there is no homosexual human species any more than there is a heterosexual one. I realize that this is not easily understood by the simple (simple persons, let me quickly provide a noun). Another reader, an academic (scholar), apparently in thrall to the correspondence of the Marquess of Queensberry, chides me for not "noticing" Ellmann's exciting new discovery of obscure Q postcards, etc (Letters, October 9–15). These discoveries, no matter how exciting they must be in Xerox-land, are of no interest to me, or to anyone who must make the attempt (*Fessai*) to "place" Wilde today.

COREVIDAL
Ravella 84010, Salerno, Italy.

The National Library of China

Sir, – Lynn Struve is to be congratulated on her perceptive article on the National Library of China (August 14). One of the present writers (Susan Prentice) is the first Western librarian to have worked in the NLC since 1949 and can attest to some of the difficulties of access in the Old Building of the NLC.

Relief, however, has come faster than Professor Struve's predicted date of 1990. The official opening of the new National Library of China building, which we attended, took place on October 6. The NLC building, situated in the north-western suburbs of Beijing, in the vicinity of the Purple Bamboo Park, occupies 7.4 hectares with a floor space of 140,000 square metres largely covering two main tower sections, the whole complex being in the Han style. It is the largest single library building in the world.

The NLC staff just made the official opening ceremony with hundreds of staff working long hours to meet the deadline. Soldiers from the People's Liberation Army moved fourteen volumes a night for three months prior

to the opening and will continue the book moves until the end of 1987. The pace of building from foundations in 1983 to completion in 1987 left other National Librarians "speechless".

By December 15 all thirty-three new reading rooms are expected to be open to the public and should quickly receive the anticipated 7–8,000 users per day. The attractively designed and fitted-out reading rooms with larger open-access book stacks, based on Western models, will undoubtedly serve as an example to other new Chinese library buildings. A CLSI circulation system for 300,000 books, American optical disks – such as DIALOG – in reading rooms, banks of microform readers, a German book delivery system and lavishly equipped audio-visual rooms will greatly assist in overcoming some of the problems outlined by Struve.

The old NLC building will become a "branch public library" of two million volumes largely consisting of popular Chinese classics. Struve's nostalgic hope that the old building will continue to be used may be dashed as the rare books and newspapers are to be moved after the next rainy season with a completion of that move by the end of 1988.

It is still difficult to assess, however, now that the building is completed, the number and level of staff needed to maintain standards. China faces a huge shortage of trained library staff and its needs cannot be met by the present output of some excellent library schools such as that of Peking University. The present pristine state of the building will have to stand up to the wear and tear of those 8,000 users a day and the hostile Beijing climate. The overseas guests uncovered faults in some lifts and toilets before the first users had appeared in the building!

Now that the National Library of China has produced one of the major library buildings of this century, it is to be hoped they will maintain it adequately for their own and overseas users, like Lynn Struve, and for the users of the twenty-first century.

COLIN STEELE.
SUSAN PRENTICE.
Australian National University Library, GPO Box 4,
Canberra ACT 2601.

'Through Parisian Eyes'

Sir, – Melinda Camber Porter (Letters, October 2–8), in her attack on my review of her book, *Through Parisian Eyes*, rather tellingly misquotes me. "He states," she writes, "that Malraux is 'simply missing from the book', whereas in fact the book included an interview with him. The sentence I actually wrote read as follows: 'At least, there were clearly supposed to be thirty-three interviews but some of the most important subjects – Sartre, de Beauvoir, Malraux, Raymond Aron – are simply missing.'"

Had I been a little more proud of words, I suppose what I might have written is that while the book, though setting out to be a collection of interviews and actually including the names of Sartre etc in its table of contents, reneges on

this promise by actually including no interviews at all with three of the four mentioned above, while the evidence of an interview with Malraux is disappointingly slight, the pages on him carrying a few lines over a paragraph of reported speech from him but otherwise relying entirely on what other people have said to Ms Porter about Malraux. No date is given either for this interview or for any of the interviews Porter says she carried out.

I am afraid that this minor alteration would not in any way have modified the opinion I expressed in my review that Ms Porter's book is very insubstantial.

R. W. JOHNSON.
Mgdales College, Oxford.

Paul Ricoeur

Sir, – J. Hillis Miller, in Arnoldian vein, claims that the "one thing useful for good reading" is a "recognition of small significant details in a text . . . that go against its apparent thematic assertions" (October 9–15).

Would he therefore accept that the contradiction of his dogmatic assertion that there is "no such thing" as time by his admission that "there is . . . not time . . . to argue these points in detail" is the one thing needing to be said about his article?

I hope not. Much of what he says about Ricoeur does need to be said. But why impose his own preferred mode of reading so rigidly and why accept so uncritically the belief (which is all that it is) that language cannot refer even indirectly to a reality outside itself?

T. R. WRIGHT.
School of English Language and Literature, The University, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU.

'The Palestinian Catastrophe'

Sir, – In his letter to you (October 9–15) on Michael Palumbo's book *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, Brian Johnston takes Elon Salmon to task for "not . . . looking in the right places". This is precisely the charge that Elon Salmon originally made against Michael Palumbo. His work is based upon recently released United Nations archives which can by no stretch of the imagination be called primary sources. The United Nations arrived on the scene only after the 1948 war and their sources were the at best secondary sources heavily embellished by the Arab propaganda machine. The only primary sources were contemporary media reports in which none of the charges made by Palumbo was mentioned. There is no evidence in those first-hand reports of rape or of atrocities.

Both Simha Flapan and Noam Chomsky rely on the same secondary sources as the United Nations reports. This is a good example of how history comes to be distorted and it is the duty of all of us to ensure that this kind of revisionism is nipped in the bud from the start.

JANE MOONMAN.
British-Israel Public Affairs Committee (BIPAC),
126/134 Baker Street, London W1M 1FH.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 352.
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 20.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 352" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on November 27.

1 Her face was void'd, yet to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O as to embrace me she inclin'd,
I wink'd, she fled, and day brought back my night.

2 As I slept for a few minutes in my chair, to which I am more addicted than I could wish, I heard as I thought my poor wife call me by the familiar name of fondness which she gave me. My recollections on waking were melancholy enough.

3 My love came back to me, Under the November tree,
Shelterless and dim.
He put his hand upon my shoulder.
He did not think me strange or old,
Nor I, him.

Competition No 349
Winner: Fabienne Smith

Answers:
1 As my canny subjects of Scotland say, if you keep a thing seven years, you are sure to find a use for it at last.
Sir Walter Scott, *Woodstock*, chapter 28.

2 I've no great cause to love that spot on earth,
Which holds what might have been the noblest nation:
But though I owe it little but my birth,
I feel a mixed regret and veneration.
For its decaying fame and former worth.
Seven years (the usual term of transportation)
Of absence lay one's old resentments level.
When a man's country's going to the devil,
Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto the Tenth, LXVI.

3 From the time you left me, our friends say I have altered completely – am not the same person – perhaps in this letter I am for a letter one takes up one's existence from the time we last met – I dare say you have altered also – every man does – our bodies every seven years are completely fresh material – seven years ago it was not this hand that clenched itself against Hammond. We are like the relief garments of a saint: the same and not the same: for the careful Monks patch it and patch it: till there's not a thread of the original garment left, and still they show it for St Anthony's shirt.
John Keats, Letter to George and d Georgina Kents, Friday 17–Monday 27 September, 1819.

Post-Modern disagreements

Stephen Games

Peter Blake, the only artist to address a recent symposium on Post-Modernism at the Tate Gallery, used the occasion to illustrate his sense that contemporary British artists as a whole had been unfairly treated in comparison with their American counterparts. The British were "better", he said. They had developed and matured where the Americans had been held back by their dealers from doing anything to destabilize the reputations on which their commercial success had been built. Asked later to justify this chauvinism, he retorted a little: it was only "coincidental" that Bacon, Auerbach and Freud were working in Britain, he said; nevertheless, it was a fact. The question of national anxiety emerged again when the critic Peter Fuller took the stand. After an angry attack on Post-Modernism's "fairground eclecticism", Fuller took up his familiar line that if painting is to be redeemed, nationalism offers its greatest hope.

A symposium held by the Anglo-American Art Association at the Tate in June flourished on the same rock. Intended merely to examine post-war art in Britain and the United States, it turned into an ineffectual struggle by British speakers to deny what Robert Rosenblum of New York University had presented as self-evident: the contention that Britain's artistic relationship with America since the war had been one of dependency. America had taught Britain a new language and Britain had

compliantly spoken it.

That the two events should have broken up in the same way indicates the sense of grievance, even insult, occasioned as the loss of empire begins to bite. What is significant, however, is that the feeling of having been marginalized should seek redress in further marginalization, as if what was attractive about Britain's past was its Britishness rather than its self-sufficiency or its power to dictate terms.

The object of the symposium was not, however, to discuss nationalism, but to explore definitions of Post-Modernism prompted by Academy Edition's publication of *Post-Modernism* by the architectural critic Charles Jencks. The definition which Jencks seems most comfortable with at the moment is that Post-Modernism is Nietzsche, Freud and Einstein but also Chomsky, Levi-Strauss and Foucault; that it accepts mass-production and mass culture but welcomes their modification by economic, regional and historical forces. "In every instance," says Jencks, "Post-Modernism is 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'." What ticks his critics is that this inclusiveness appears to give him a licence for critical ambiguity – a licence complicated by the fact that while Jencks could justifiably embrace ambiguity as a legitimate critical Post-Modern position, he denies that he does.

Jencks's book subtles Post-Modernism as "The New Classicism (not Neo-Classicism, he insists) in Art and Architecture". In 1977, when his *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* first appeared, however, Jencks

was not talking about Classicism, and even in the third edition of the book in 1981, the portmanteau expression "Post-Modern Classicism" only appeared in the preface. Today, Jencks requires us to understand that Post-Modernism is Classicism, which seems to imply an aesthetic unity at odds with the fractured, hybrid character he ascribes to it elsewhere. Jencks ended his symposium lecture by flashing up a slide of Raphael's "School of Athens" as a model of the goal to which, he hoped, Post-Modernism was leading. But, as he wrote in 1984, he has a vested interest in Post-Modernism and a weakness for paradox.

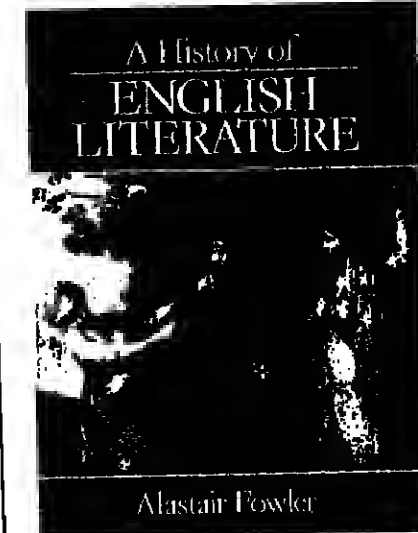
Jencks's new unity surprised those of his listeners who had understood the Post-Modern condition to be a tragic incapacity brought on by information overload and world-weary scepticism, and who see him continuing to welcome the consequences of this condition – pluralism, eclecticism, "rural-coding" – while appearing to lose interest in the variety of architectures that captured his attention ten years ago. Peter Fuller demanded a more thorough-going rejection, as if a human condition could be rejected at will. He scorned Post-Modernism for its absence of values – its moral relativism – and asked how Jencks could elevate "Post-Modernism" to the role of a Counter-Reformation on such evidence as Michael Graves's "dwarfing" of a new building for Walt Disney on Disney Drive (Jencks was born by Fuller's misrepresentation of him). "I brought him in to Academy Edition," he said. "He didn't play by the rules, he

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"Are you interested in books and writing about books?" This question, printed in large flamboyant script, appeared on an envelope addressed to the Editor of the TLS. It's good to know that the *London Review of Books*, the sender, maintains such a good sense of humour.

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COMMENTARY

A spell with the Evil One

Rosemary Dinneage

The Witches of Eastwick
Variouscinemas

The camera flies us over a view of small-town New England, wholesome as apple pie. Eastwick (pop 7,000), thick with autumnal maple trees and centred on its classic white wooden church. It is High School graduation day, complete with a soprano rendition of "America the Beautiful" and an interminable patriotic speech by the headmaster. So interminable, so boring for everyone; then - how lucky! - clouds no bigger than a man's hand begin to gather and in no time a mighty storm puts a stop to the proceedings.

It is one of the indications, rather low-key, that the three lovely witches of Eastwick have their own line in magic; in general, the film diverges from John Updike's novel in placing most of the spooky power in the Jack Nicholson part. Alexandra Sculpin, Jane Fonda's niece, is the most powerful; she is the one who causes the storm. She has many children; all are divorced or widowed; they meet on Thursday evenings for girl-talk and a few spells. A new moon around the place would be nice, they muse; not, attracter... As promptly as the thunderstorm, Darryl Van Horne (Nicholson) arrives in town to take over an abandoned villa.

Along with much else - the film is only "based" on the novel - Updikean elements are played down: though all the witches make love with the irresistible stranger, the scenes where all four bath together with a quadruple pleasuring afterwards are replaced by swimming in tasteful costumes in an indoor pool. Matters do not remain so blissfully syncretic for long. Nasty things begin to happen to opponents of the black powers: the witches take fright and try to escape the spell.

The last sequences, where they pit their wits and magic against the diabolic Darryl, break hilariously away from the novel: Gothic trim-

mings are laid on with a trowel and the special effects team produce wonders. Evil, of course, is defeated by a hairbreadth. Jack Nicholson goes appropriately over the top throughout this wonderfully enjoyable film, and Cher, Susan Sarandon and Michelle Pfeiffer are equally right as the witches.

This is the first book of Updike's to be made into a major film and no reflection I think it is better that it has been used as a springboard for something purely cinematic rather than faithfully translated. Updike's rich wall-to-wall prose could not have been reproduced, and his subtle wit had to be replaced by a more explosive visual humour. Among things that are greatly missed, though, is Van Horne/the Devil's modern art collection - a giant vinyl hamburger, a neon raincoat unplugged and unending dusting, a mock-up of Brillo pad boxes, and a naked woman made of chicken wire, flattened beer cans, an old chamber pot, and pieces of car bumper - "You know, the beauty," says Van Horne, "the richness, the *Viel-fähigkeit*, the, you know, the ambiguity."

Whether it is flattering or unflattering to women that the locus of evil power has been shifted to Van Horne in the film I am not sure. In the book the women, particularly Alexandra, are earth goddesses, ruthless elemental powers. They had been bored by their husbands and had made them respectively into a table mat, a herbal seasoning, and a kitchen jar of coloured powder. When Van Horne, in the book, finds away with a whimper rather than a bang, Alexandra says, "He couldn't create, he had no powers of his own that way, all he could do was release what was already there in others. Even us: we had the coven before he came to town, and our powers such as they are. I think he wanted to be a woman, like he said, but he wasn't even that." Coolly the three create new husbands with a pumpkin and spices and a bit of menstrual blood. Their creations work, unlike the confections of chicken wire and Brillo pads. In the film these primitives are more like pretty ladies temporarily dazzled by the Evil One. Nicer, but secondary.

bourne written this play, he might well have made fun of the genteel aspirations of Dennis's wife Pauline (though he would surely have done so with more sympathy). But he would probably have been harder on Dennis's absurd fantasies of escape. Willy Russell has fun of a wearisomely familiar kind with the mention of garden gnomes, patio waterfalls and other supposedly lower-middle class enthusiasms. Much of the humour is on the situation-comedy level where mention of spam fritters is enough to get a laugh. But Dennis's impulse to put on a rucksack, abandon his family and head for the open road is portrayed without apparent satire.

According to Willy Russell's programme note, the play was completed in 1976, and even though he has altered certain details to bring the play up to date (inserting a mention of Terry Wogan, for example) it remains cruelly dated. It is the feeble last gasp of the *Billy Liar* sort of argument, written with the assumption that anyone doing a mediocre job of the kind that involves making or selling ought really to escape into something more genuine, such as writing for television or composing folk-songs.

Russell's point is also that this fantasy of escape is a common one. But his portrait of the housing estate crammed with identical bungalows is so second-hand and the escalation of his comic plot so perfunctory that his social criticism carries little conviction.

Much of the cast have few opportunities to peer past the cardboard of Russell's characterization. Michael Angelis, who starred so movingly in *Boys from the Black Staff*, can do little more than bluster. Russ Abbott, one of Britain's most popular television comedians, gives a performance of immense vitality as Dennis, effortlessly controlling the stage. He has inserted many pieces of comic business, inventively toying with napkins, a cordless phone, a wine bottle and any other objects that come to hand. They don't show much respect for the play, but they provide most of the evening's enjoyment.

Levels of prostration

Mick Imlah

SAMSHEPARD
A Lie of the Mind
Royal Court Theatre

A Lie of the Mind is an old piece of theatre. The action, set in the raw Midwest, begins moments after the insane hero Jake (energetically impersonated by Will Patton) has benched his wife to what in his mind is her death, but which soon appears on stage as her rather more distressing brain damage. It closes three and a quarter hours later with a reconciliation of sorts; Jake, trekking through a blizzard in boxer shorts with the Stars and Stripes for a cap, kisses her chastely on her semimatted head and leaves her with his blessing on a bigamous union with his own (reluctant) brother.

In the protracted interim, these two return under duress to their childhood beds, and in the whims of parents no more in control of things that they are themselves. The "lie" of the title refers both to the prostitution that levels most of the characters in turn (hitherto decks of Paul Brown's set centre on a bed) and to the selective amnesia that even the nominally sane are shown to suffer (neither mother, for example, will acknowledge that her child is married). The persistence of these delusions makes conventional exposition absurd; in particular, Jake and his mother seem to discover (or invent) their relations to his dead father as they go along: "DON'T TELL ME I ALREADY KNOW SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW," yells Jake in the middle of one posterous exchange. By the end of the first act, when Jake, dashing aside the soup plied on him by Mum (a strongly mannered performance by Geraldine McEwan), stumps up and down on his bed, we feel that the single is set for some positive adult influence to enter the play. However, each character remains isolated by his or her particular inadequacy, and the little sprints made by Jake's siblings in the direction of common sense are cynically shot down by backwoods manias.

The biggest single problem that Shepard's bizarre text poses for his director (here the

resourceful Simon Curtis) is a heroine who cannot speak properly. Miranda Richardson's task as the battered Beth is all the more difficult because we have no knowledge of her before the attack, and therefore no context for our shock and pity. For most of the first act she is made to slur unintelligibly; later she is landed with a laboriously dislocated idiom, as though the blows to her head had knocked out ordinary usage and left in careful, quaint inversions: "You're not the guard of me", or (trying on her father's clothes) "Shirt brings me a man. I am shirtman." It is impossible to say why her confusion is relieved by some mumblings of perfect insight, unless the brain damage is her own contrivance, the least plausible of the play's "lies". Not even a performance as wholehearted as Richardson's can clarify Shepard's intentions here.

Why does the play have to be so long? The elaborate scheme of symmetrical effects may be essential, but - partly in consequence - much of the dialogue is not. For example, the emblem of the mother with a bowl in her son's bed is more powerful than Geraldine McEwan's predictable monologue there. A more general *longueurs* infects many of the spoken exchanges, which is less a result of randomness of what is said than of the way Shepard writes "speeches"; wherever there is an element of introspection there is sloth, each step of meaning only a half-shuffle on from the last: "Wonder? Did I ever wonder? ... Did I ever wonder? Yeah. You bet your sweet life I wonder. But you know where all that wondering got me? Nowhere. Absolutely nowhere. Because here I am. Here I am" This tells the audience nothing new about the character or her situation, and half the words could go with no sacrifice of naturalism. It may be part of Shepard's design to make Beth's and Jake's climactic speeches on Iowa (an hour apart) almost indistinguishable in their hesitant rhythms and colourless affirmations, but it is physically incredible that their experiences should have made equal dopy optimists of them both. Thanks, then, for the rich comic parts Shepard has written for Beth's parents, and for the excellent Tony Haygarth and Deborah Norton, whose performances do much to redeem a difficult evening.

Taking it on the chin

E. S. Turner

HOWARD GOODALL and JOHN RETALLACK
Girlfriends
Playhouse Theatre

Those of us who spent the Second World War untiredly surrounded by lively, even lovely, young women - whether on gunsites, bomber stations or in naval establishments - have often felt that novelists and playwrights have neglected our predicament. It has been left to a composer in his twenties, Howard Goodall, to celebrate the part played by the Women's Auxiliary Air Force on a bomber station. If his *Girlfriends* makes a bit of a belly-landing on the stage of the reopened Playhouse, at least it was a brave try, and no blame attaches to its lustily singing crew.

It is December 1943, the worst of times, which gives Goodall the chance to attack alarm and despondency with his swelling, inspiring choruses ("We take it on the chin; / We never chuck it in"). One after another, the pilot friends of airwoman Phyllis (Hazel O'Connor) are reported lost, but is this Black Widow heartless? She next falls for the brother of the girl who equals the aircraft. That is not the plot, except for much solemn knockabout over the theft of a length of parachute silk to make knickers. This results in the supposed culprit (Jenna Russell) being given pack drill, running round the camp, heavily weighted, till she drops; a punishment which was not practised on any mixed gunsite on which this reviewer served and, if it had been, would probably have been looked to in the *Daily Mirror*.

The rule in *Girlfriends* is: if it can be sung, sing it. Spoken dialogue is rare. The WAAF flight officer (Donna Chappin) gives a plain-song rendering of "I would like to take this

opportunity of welcoming new recruits to the station", including the routine warnings on feminine hygiene. An airwoman calls for attention with "Twelve men were killed in last night's raid, / Eight men are pretty bad" and continuing "One crew went down at sea, / They had done 23" (missions). There is more, rather in the tradition of "He is no better, he is much the same." At times Goodall and his co-author and director, John Retallack, seem to be hymning bits of Ministry of Information handout, not to mention King's Regulations. Even that could be done with wit, but these words are leaden. Never did so many strong-voiced young women cover up with such a will.

Sadly, the authors allow laitar-day doubts to enter the girls' heads. Servicewoman of those times did not whinge over "all the children we have killed, all the coffins we have filled". Still less, one fancies, did cruel women sergeants lay into "conchie pests". But Goodall's WAAs finish the course resolutely upbeat, even singing "We have to kill/Blood must spill". (It was a convention of the time that women did not kill; in practice their polished skills enabled men to do so).

The set by William Dudley is magnificent and redemptive all: a shifting montage, often lit foggy winter light, of control towers, bomber under-bellies, giant doom-laden maps, a lightning runway, a barrackroom ("Out of Bounds to RAF Within 25 Feet of This Notice"), with every now and then the thunder of bombers overhead. There is a disconcerting moment when the sole male in the cast, the doomed pilot (David Easter) climbs up apparently into his bomber, but is next seen dangling his legs from the hangar roof, singing away as if on a night out. The set offers a high-tech challenge to the elegant old auditorium, reconciled in cream and gold. Outside, a few feet away, lies a notorious Hogarthian camp of derelicts.

The Shakespearean performance circus

John Wilders

In his *Playing in Shakespeare's London* Andrew Gurr quotes an anecdote from a little-known pamphlet published in 1642. It concerns a tradesman's wife who, on a day when her husband was to be occupied at the Royal Exchange, asked his permission to take care of her house. He instructed her to take care of her house, she sat in a box "among some gallants and gallant wenches" and, on her return, confessed that her purse had been stolen and that it had contained "four pieces, six shillings and a silver tooth-pick".

Quoth her husband, "Where did you put it?" "Under my petticoat, between that and my smock." "What, (quoth he) did you feel no body's hand there?" "Yes, (quoth she), I felt one's hand there, but I did not think he had come for that."

This amusing glimpse into the habits of the London audiences, and the use to which Gurr puts it, are characteristic of his informative study. It is one of a multitude of references to playgoing, over two hundred of which he has assembled in an appendix, and it is submitted to rigorous scrutiny in order to extract its full significance. Gurr points out that, since the wife was in a box, she must have gone to an indoor theatre; that, packed in among the gallants, she must have felt uncomfortable; that, since her husband was occupied at the Royal Exchange, she was the wife of a magistrate; that, in taking her husband's apprentice, she was among the court ladies who took their pages with them to playhouses, and that her reaction to the groping hand suggests that such conduct was not uncommon among playhouse crowds. On the basis of this scrap of evidence, he begins to create a vivid, intimate scene of what it was like to go to the theatre in the early seventeenth century.

Much of his material is new. He has realized, for example, that if we really want to know who went to plays at that time, the place to start is with the specific individuals who are known to have done so and, in another appendix, he has listed the names of all such people and identified who they were. As he admits, this collection of 162 named playgoers is only a tiny sample of the 50 million people who are thought to have attended the commercial theatres between 1567 and 1642, but at least the evidence is firm and it is a start. Other evidence is well known, but the scrupulous and imaginative way in which Gurr interprets it brings out significances which have been neglected. It has, of course, long been known that when in 1596 James Burbage's lease on the land on which he had built the Theatre had almost expired, he bought the Blackfriars but was prevented by the Privy Council from using it as a playhouse. It is usually thought that his reason for purchasing the Blackfriars was to have an auditorium which could be used in the winter, but Gurr emphasizes that in deciding to move to a "hall" playhouse Burbage was committing his company's future to performing in a neighbourhood much more fashionable than Shoreditch; to an audience required to pay up to five times the admission price of the amphitheatre and therefore drawn from a more prosperous section of the community. Burbage's decision was part of a general development whereby the plays rose from a status scarcely different from that of vagabonds to that of servants of the King himself. The building of the Globe was undertaken as a last resort only when the Blackfriars venture had been thwarted, and the unique organization of the Lord Chamberlain's Men whereby the leading players also had shares in the Globe, came about almost by

chance as a result of the financial disaster over the Blackfriars and the need of the Burbages for money.

Gurr also reconstructs from a variety of evidence what the experience of playgoing was like. There were constant distractions - the serving of refreshments, the smells which issued from the artisans, the smoke of tobacco and the obstructions caused by the high-crowned hats, often adorned with feathers, fashionable at the time. "The mental composition of any playgoer must have varied according to an enormous complex of factors, ranging from the physical condition of the playgoer's feet or stomach, or the hat worn by the playgoer in front, to the hearer's familiarity with Ovid or Holinshed." Small wonder that Falkland was grateful to receive the printed text of a play since "at a single hearing . . . minima ears could not catch half the words". One understands better why Jonson, who expected his

differences between audiences at different locations. This will, no doubt, not be the last or even the fullest account we shall have of the playgoers of Shakespeare's time but it is, for the present, the most vivid and substantial.

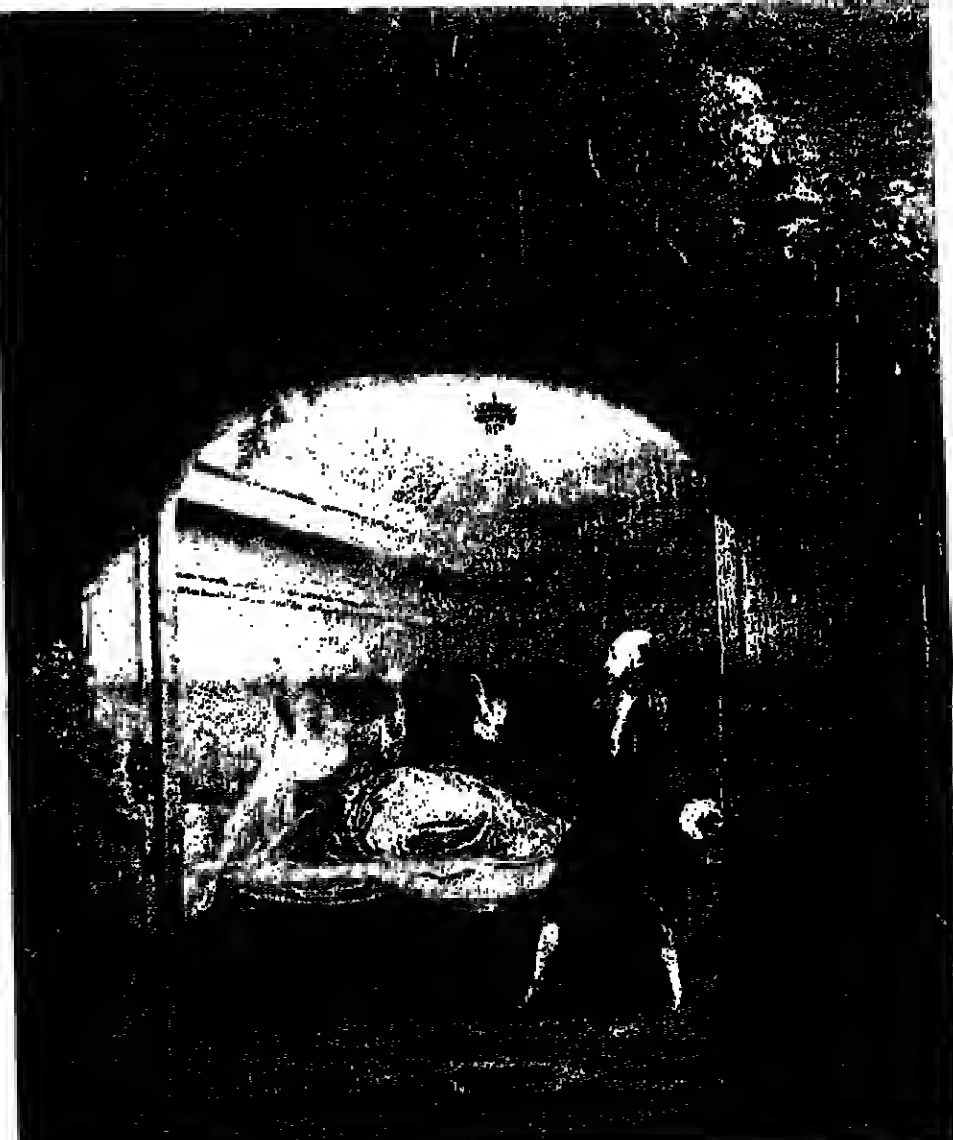
"The history of the writing of plays", says Gurr, "is not complete without an account of the audiences." Nor, according to David Wiles, is it complete without an account of the actors. In *Shakespeare's Clown* he devotes most of his attention to Will Kemp, for five years a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Richard Tarlton, the first "clown" and Kemp's professional mentor, and Robert Armin, who succeeded Kemp as the resident clown in Shakespeare's company. Kemp's speciality was simple, plebeian, down-to-earth clowns such as Launce, Bottom and Dogberry, and Armin's the verbally adroit, analytical clowns such as Touchstone, Feste and Thersites. Each of their roles, Wiles demonstrates, was cen-

thary, improvisatory, addressed frankly to the audience - is entirely different from the punning and ingenuities of logic given to Armin. "While Kemp's talk is narrative or descriptive, Armin's is analytic."

With his interest in the popular, plebeian elements in Renaissance drama, Wiles is, of course, exploring territory already opened up by such critics as Robert Weimann and Michael D. Bristol. The ghost of Bakhtin also emerges briefly from the cellarage. But Wiles is illuminating in very specific ways of his own and his work is grounded in precise historical and textual evidence. He has made a fresh, provocative contribution to our understanding of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

One of the pleasures of his thesis is the bracing self-confidence with which it is argued. Marion Lomax's more tentative conjectures suffer by comparison. In *Stage Images and Traditions: Shakespeare to Ford* she starts from the sound assumption that the Elizabethan playgoers brought with them into the theatre minds stocked with a wealth of visual and verbal experience most of which we have now lost: recollections of civic pageants and royal progresses, tilts and tournaments, funeral effigies, masques, memories of other plays and a knowledge of biblical and classical texts and their associated iconography. Her task has been partially to reconstruct such mental furniture. Hence, she suggests, the first playgoers to see the supposed statue of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* must not have been astonished when it seemed to come to life because "figures standing like statues, and suddenly stepping out of their settings to address the approaching monarch" were a familiar feature of the entertainments put on during royal progresses. Again, Lomax believes that the cave out of which Guiderius and Arviragus emerge in *Cymbeline* could have stirred various associations, including Pandora's box, the sepulchre of Christ and the cave in Plato's *Republic*. It could, I suppose, just as well have reminded them that Truth, the daughter of Time, was also represented as coming out of a cave (or, alternatively, a pit). Which, and how many, of these connections would occur to how many people? We have no means of knowing. In pointing out so many iconographic resemblances, Lomax does not avoid what Harriett Hawkins has called the "salmons in both" fallacy, as when she proposes that the arrival of Peniles in rusty armour might have reminded some playgoers of Don Quixote, but might also have been associated with the revival of the chivalric ideal centred on Prince Henry. The trouble is that there is no apparent limit to the parallels and links which could be set up. Some of them may have been perceived consciously by some playgoers, some unconsciously and some not at all. We simply can't know, and Lomax's awareness of this difficulty accounts for the tentativeness of her conjectures. She might have done better to see her task as a reconstruction of the minds not of the audiences but of the playwrights and of the eclectic experience on which their imaginations worked. As it stands, her book serves chiefly to substantiate Madeline Doran's warning which Lomax quotes with approval: "We cannot turn ourselves into Elizabethans; we should not fool ourselves into thinking we can."

The responses of audiences to productions of Shakespeare over four centuries provide much of the material collected in two additions to the *Plays in Performance* series, now happily revived after an abortive start six years ago, and they give us a healthy reminder of the extraordinary power of the plays to move, excite and astonish. At performances of *Othello*, Julie Hankey tells us, "women have shrieked and fainted, old men have laid their heads down on their arms and sobbed, young men have lost their sleep and gone about for days in a trance". Hankey's edition of *Othello* (like her edition of *Richard III*, 1981) and J. S. Bratton's of *King Lear* bring us as close as we are likely to get to being in a theatre and seeing past productions of these tragedies. We may not be able to turn ourselves into Elizabethans, but with the help of these copiously documented texts, we can almost turn ourselves into eyewitnesses of Coriakin's Lear at Drury Lane in 1742 and Paul Robeson's Othello at the Savoy in 1930. Each edition includes a full account of the stage history of the play, followed by a text printed in small type on the left-hand pages



David Garrick and Miss Bellamy as Romeo and Juliet, from an engraving by R. S. Ravenel (1733) after a painting by Benjamin Wilson. The picture is reproduced from *Shakespeare in Performance: Romeo and Juliet* by Jill L. Levinson (133pp. Manchester University Press, £15.95, 0179022185), which also examines the twentieth-century productions by John Gielgud, Peter Brook and Franco Zeffirelli.

audiences to listen to his words and not merely gape at the spectacle, expressed such contempt for the stage. His plays could be given the full and judicious attention they deserved only when read on the printed page.

Despite the incompleteness of the evidence, Gurr ventures to tackle such questions as "In what ways did the tastes of playgoers change and develop?" "Who went to which theatres?" and "What kinds of plays were put on at which theatres?" His deductions lead him to take issue with Ann Jennalie Cook's belief that the typical playgoer of Shakespeare's time was a member of an elite, and to stress the

ceivd by Shakespeare for a specific actor who had unique talents (Kemp's agility, Armin's gifts as a singer), physique (Kemp was massive and Armin diminutive) and reputation with the playgoers. To go to a performance of the *Dream* was to see Kemp as much as Bottom, and to observe the dog-like Thersites or the Fool in *Lear* was to watch the cringing, dwarf-like Armin. "It is all too easy to assume, in retrospect," says Wiles, "that the actor was the servant or interpreter of the writer; to forget that the writer was, in no less real a sense, the servant or interpreter of the actor."

He goes on, in the bulk of the book, to substantiate this assertion by establishing on the basis of their published writings and the reports of eyewitnesses what were Kemp's and Armin's distinctive styles, and then to show how Shakespeare provided for their talents in the scripts he wrote for them. It is in the latter of these enterprises - the interpretation of the texts in the light of the personalities of the performers - that Wiles is most illuminating. Whereas the early clowns, such as Launce in *The Two Gentlemen* and Launcelot in *The Merchant*, tend to operate independently of the main plots and to have prolonged asides to the audience (as Falstaff does), the later ones like Touchstone and Feste are incorporated more fully into the action. The dialogue provided for Kemp - seemingly spontaneous,

WILLY RUSSELL
One for the Road
Lyric Theatre

Willy Russell is one of a celebrated trio of Liverpool playwrights. The least known of these is probably Bill Morrison, author of *Flying Blind*, an extraordinary comedy about Irish terrorism which was produced in Liverpool and at the Royal Court in London ten years ago. Alan Bleasdale is the most famous, largely because of television work like *The Boys from the Black Staff* and *The Man of the Year*. But, if only through the West End and then Hollywood success of *Educating Rita*, Willy Russell has been the most commercially successful. A suspicion that he may have achieved this success by being the most soft-centred of the three is reinforced by the revival (and first London production) of *One for the Road*. This is a play that protests a lot, but against us about what it is difficult to say.

Dennis Cain is a central heating, or rather, as his social climbing wife puts it - a "zoned heating", salesman. With Dennis's moderate professional success, the couple have moved from their terrace to a genteel housing estate: where the drives and closes are named after composers. The play is set at a dinner party the couple give for their friends on the evening before Dennis's fortieth birthday.

Dennis has been driven to the verge of a nervous breakdown by his growing conviction that he and his friends have abandoned the idealism of their youth during the 1960s in exchange for drab suburban conformity. He laments to John Mitchell on his life and plans to escape his family responsibilities by joining the hitch-hikers he sees standing at the entrance to the motorway on his way home from work.

Rushing into the milieu of suburban quiet desperation, Russell risks unflattering comparison with Alan Ayckbourn. Had Ayck-

Andrew Gurr, *Playing in Shakespeare's London*. 264pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50, 0521 233655.

David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*. 223pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.00, 0521 328403.

Marion Lomax, *Stage Images and Traditions: Shakespeare to Ford*. 202pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50, 0521 326591.

Julie Hankey (Editor), *Plays in Performance: Othello*. 334pp. Bristol Classical Press. £24.95 (paperback), £9.95, 0852922313.

J. S. Bratton (Editor), *Plays in Performance: King Lear*. 247pp. Bristol Classical Press. £24 (paperback), £9.95, 0852922313.

Stanley Wells (Editor), *Shakespeare Survey 39*. 220pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50, 0521 275751.

Stanley Wells (Editor), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. 329pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50 (paperback), £8.95, 0521 267374.

George Stelner, *A Reading Against Shakespeare*. (The W. P. Ker Lecture for 1986). 17pp. University of Glasgow Press. Paperback, £1.08, 0852 612079.

Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare's Scepticism*. 269pp. Brighton: Harvester. £29.50, 07108 11144.

Vivian Thomas, *The Moral Universe of Shakespeare's Problem Plays*. 236pp. Croom Helm. £25.00, 07099 43229.

Jan Kott, *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the carnival tradition*. Translated by Danila Miedzyrzeczka and Lillian Vallee. 165pp. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. £32.95 (paperback), £14.95, 08101 87376.

Samurai at work

James McMullen

MITSUBISHI CORPORATION
Japanese Business Language: An essential dictionary
221pp. Kegan Paul International. £9.95.
0170301993

This is one of those dictionaries that should be read discursively rather than consulted for the meaning of individual entries. Designed to alleviate "the persistent difficulties foreign executives have in understanding Japanese business practices", it lists some 500 essential words and phrases describing Japanese business practices, social customs and popular culture. Each definition is given a short commentary intended to provide "fascinating insights into the world of Japan Inc".

The day begins early for the Japanese business man, it seems, when he leaves his *shairyō* (company dormitory) for *chōrei* (morning ritual) at the company, where the workers "may go through a set of limbering-up exercises and finish off by singing the company song or shouting the company slogan in unison". Later, the up-and-coming executive may attend a *kangō* (meeting), for which the ground will have been scrupulously prepared by *senawashi* (digging round the roots of a tree), so that it does not end in *Odawara hyōji* (inconclusive meeting, after fruitless deliberations among the besieged during the siege of Odawara, "way back in 1590"). He will certainly be served tea at this function by an *OL* (office lady) up to the age of about forty or a *shokuba no hana* (flower of the workplace; ambiguously either a "refreshing" female or a "wallflower" who "cannot be expected to contribute substantially to actual work"). Later again, he may have an *uppinio* (appointment), which may or may not keep to the prearranged time. All this while he will be brimful of *konjō* (fighting spirit) on behalf of his company, though to be a *midretn shain* (furious company employee) is now apparently no longer fashionable. However, he had better not indulge in *nakegake* (acts of individual initiative), because "in Japanese society where things are done collectively as a group, anyone trying to do a smart thing by himself will often find that in the long run he will be a loser".

Cumulatively these entries depict, albeit from a novel and ingenious angle, a society now familiar from sociological and anthropological literature, one based on industriousness, groupishness, hierarchy, discipline and radical sex discrimination. Since metaphor is so often conservative, the book also provides glimpses into the harsh feudal and military world from which the orderly society of modern Japan is the not so distant historical descendant. To pay for something out of one's own pocket, for instance, is *jibara wo kuru* (to cut

one's own stomach); to force someone to resign, *tsumeharu wa kinaseru* (make him commit forced self-dissemination); a confident air, *right-hand man* is called *fankoro-ganna* (dagger or stick); the struggle between two companies for domination of a market is called a *Sekigahara*, after the climactic battle of 1600; voluntarily unemployed men, as well as unelected politicians, may be called *rōnin* (masterless samurai).

The book explicitly aspires to an "entertaining" style, and would have benefited from illustration by one of Japan's gifted cartoonists. The tone is in fact curiously mixed, no doubt because it emanates from a Japanese company and therefore can only be the work of a group. On the one hand, there is genuine philological learning here. The expression *nakazu udezu* (does not stir, does not fly - used of a man who does not fulfil his promise) is correctly traced to its origin in the China of the late seventh century BC, which, however, properly falls in the Spring and Autumn (722-481 BC) rather than, as stated here, the Warring States (403-221 BC) period of Chinese history. It is interesting

Here be dialects

T. A. Shippey

ANGUS MCINTOSH, M. L. SAMUELS, MICHAEL BENSKIN (eds) Editors
A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English
Volume One, 569pp.
Volume Two, 388pp.
Volume Three, 781pp.
Volume Four, 345pp.
Aberdeen University Press. £220.
0181032471

As the editors of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* remark, the twenty-year history of that Edinburgh University project, with its alterations of ambition and fear, its revitalization through "new technology" and its timely rescues by the Mellon Foundation and by Mr and Mrs Galpin from Connecticut, would make a book in itself (and, one might add, a "cliffhanger" at that). They also believe that, for all the 2,000-page scale of their work, it is only a beginning. With all proper politeness, they are convinced that the preceding century of philological scholarship has hardly made a dent in the problem of localizing texts. For this there are perhaps three simple reasons. One is that previous investigators have been addicted to maps and to "isoglosses", which show dialect divisions as lines across the country. But there is no such thing as "a" dialect, the Edinburgh editors say: all areas are in some sense border areas. If you investigate the reflex of Old English *y*, you will get one set of results for "hill, hull, hell", and

ing to learn that in Japanese as, apparently, in Western languages, *kochū* *uo* *kuri* (chestnuts in the first originates in Aesop's fables, popular in Japanese translation since the sixteenth century. On the other hand, the commentary sometimes lapses into a rather coy or gung-ho banality reminiscent of other attempts to unfold the mysteries of Japan to foreigners. The reader is informed that "because women usually prefer an *iro-onoko* (handsome man) as their partner in a love affair the word *iro* by itself has become [sic] to be used to mean love". Faced with the prospect of their persistent difficulties in other fields, worried foreign executives doing preparatory reading before assignment to Japan may be tempted to anticipate solace from this statement. As etymology, however, the claim is more doubtful, since the word *iro*, through calque on Chinese *se* and Sanskrit *ripa*, had already picked up an erotic connotation long before the advent of the modern business world and its mores.

Though linguistic explanations are quite thorough and Japanese script is supplied for the main entries, study of this book does not

undeter for "fill, full, fell". In principle there are as many isogloss-maps as words.

Furthermore, philological studies - though for the medieval period confined entirely to written documents - have tacitly assumed that the only point of studying texts is to get to sounds, and have accordingly often assumed that mere spelling was "not evidence" - not unless the spelling, like Orm, was trying against all the odds and probabilities of the Middle Ages to write phonetically. Unlocalized texts, or copied texts (the vast majority, of course), were left aside. Finally, and most damagingly if most naturally, there was a silent consensus that most medieval texts had been copied so often and by such irregular methods that only confusion remained in them, that they were nearly all *Mischsprachen* - written by A from Lincoln, copied by scribe B from Gloucester and recopied by scribe C from Essex, all of them anyway trained in a tradition of non-consistency.

All these assumptions are false, say the Edinburgh editors. Most medieval scribes, they believe, had a consistent and localized spelling-system, and tended strongly to "translate" what they copied into their own practice. They might not, of course, do this to begin with, while they were still grappling with someone else's handwriting and form of English - first pages of medieval manuscripts are notoriously unreliable. But consistent translation was the custom rather than the exception; and a much-copied text only had to run into one "translator" to have all its previous inconsistencies ironed out. It is not a case, then, of increasing inconsistencies multiplying to end in a farrago. Most texts are in themselves good evidence of written English localization, if not of spoken English or of "dialect".

But even if the evidence means something, how can it be tied down? The editors modestly record that they began by finding "anchor" texts, like manor records or personal correspondences. These were scrutinized by means of a "questionnaire" - a term derived from the experience of modern spoken-language investigators - which gave the forms of significant words or features. Once "anchors" had been sunk, further texts (and longer ones) could be placed for "fit", at first uncertainly, but, as more evidence accumulated, with increasing precision. What is shown, one may feel, is less "place" than "relationship" (like a London Underground map); but the essence of the plan is that even doubtful texts can be used to check each other.

After all this the editors feel they can place scribes to within ten miles in the South, and perhaps thirty in the North. They have had spectacular confirmations, and interesting discrepancies. Thus Gower's language, they argue, is marked in his two "best" manuscripts by two layers, one from south-west Suffolk and one from north-west Kent - precisely the two places with which the Gower family are associated. Provisional attribution of one scribe to Lichfield led the editors to a previously unconnected Lichfield manuscript - which turned out to be in the same handwriting. Handwriting, furthermore, bled down the page of Har-

seem likely to enhance linguistic self-confidence in foreign students of Japanese. Many locations listed here are ambiguous or delicately nuanced, and incorrect use could cause serious offence or even, apparently, provoke violence. The reader is warned, for instance, that the unfortunate man who misapplies *uni sen yann sen* (a tough, wily man) - easily done given the language's regular omission of grammatical subjects - "will surely receive a smashing straight to the jaw".

For British readers, at least, *Japanese Business Language* may have a practical application. Under *meishi* (name-card), we learn that "any businessman who cannot produce a *meishi* has one strike against him". Could it be that the use of these talismanic little paper rectangles accounts for Japan's enviable record in industrial relations? It remains only for some small business man, in Britain, in the spirit of the times, to make this simple apotropaic device available to all in managerial positions in this country. With the aid of such lessons from this clever little book, British business might yet become competitive again.

ley MS 2253 to a whole sequence of documents produced in Lindlow, but the editors nevertheless insist that he only worked in Ludlow; he must have learned his business ten miles south at Leominster. Meanwhile the prior of Lytham in Lancashire, William Partrik, wrote English like a man from Hemmingborough in the East Riding - and, sure enough, that is where Partrik came from. The *Onvain*-MS is localized to a virtually uninhabited waste outside Leek. And Chaucer's language, beneath all scribal layers, is that of *The Equatorie of the Planetis*, a strange coincidence, if that work is not his holograph. It is not too much to say, as the editors half hint, that their linguistic work could be the foundation of real Middle English literary history. But can that foundation be built on?

The *Linguistic Atlas* is packed with information, but dauntingly hard to use. It consists of, in order: an Index of Sources by repositories (and these range from major libraries to private collection cigar boxes) and by counties; a set of "dot maps" for particular items; a more complex set of maps showing spellings and numbers for Linguistic Profiles; then the Linguistic Profiles themselves (all of Volume Three), which give the questionnaire results for hundreds of scribes (scribes not being co-terminous, note, with texts or MSS); and finally a County Dictionary giving forms for questionnaire items as found county by county. The scale of this is hard to convey; even the Index of Sources is on its own the largest list in existence of MSS containing Middle English. It is hard to believe that many budding editors will be able to find their way usefully round all four volumes; this is a case where know-how acquired by the editors in the process of refining the "fit" technique will not be picked up just from sifting the results.

What is all this going to do to *Piers Plowman* scholarship, still marked by editors' murmurings about "pure" dialects? And Chaucer scholarship too - one notes that the Hengwrt Ellesmere scribe is down here as LP 6400, N Central London, both MSS taken together. How does that bear on editorial practice? Why, incidentally, does the *Equatorie* not qualify as a linguistic profile, if it is in Chaucer's language? These are only the most obvious questions that arise, and they are dwarfed by the merest thoughts of *Cursor Mundii*, medieval sermons, extension to Early Middle English, or even the "Here be dragons" map of Old English.

The next step, to this reviewer, is pretty clear, and it is a summer school. I can think of nothing in this area more productive than a course for medievalists, maybe a fortnight, maybe a month, at Edinburgh University (at every laboratory in the world they will confirm that, to learn technique, you have to go where they can do it already). Here they would learn how to use these volumes, practise on a few test cases and then go home, with some confidence in a standardized technique, to continue working on what they were doing before. To that extent, the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* is as it were the script, and the stage directions, but not yet the performance. A

From spectator to actor

John Cottingham

EDWARD CRAIG
The Mind of God and the Works of Man
339pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
0193249330

The term "philosophy" is often used by literary critics and cultural historians in a much wider sense than that current in university philosophy departments. A poet or a novelist or even a painter may be said to have, or to be influenced by, "a philosophy" or "a philosophy of life", where what is meant is something rather general: a diffuse and often loosely articulated overall picture of the nature of reality and man's place in the universe. Professional philosophers sometimes tend to be rather dismissive about the status of "philosophies" in this wide sense, maintaining that they have only the most tenuous connection with Philosophy as practised as an academic discipline. The starting-point of Edward Craig's unusual and stimulating study is that the connection between "philosophies" in the general sense and "Philosophy" as a specialized discipline is very much tighter than is often supposed. If Craig is right, our understanding both of the history of Philosophy and of its current academic practice can be considerably enriched by an awareness of the underlying role played by the prevailing *Weltbild*, the general picture of reality, that informs and conditions the cultural and scientific activities of a given epoch.

Craig delineates two such pictures, corresponding to the two halves of his book's title, and argues that the first was dominant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the second can be found from "about 1780" to the present day. The first world-picture is in effect a certain conception of the nature of human cognition which Craig generally refers to as the "Image of God" doctrine. This owes much to the standard theological idea, familiar from Genesis, that man is formed in the image of God, but also involves the more specific and powerful notion that the *mind* of man is in an important sense modelled on the divine mind.

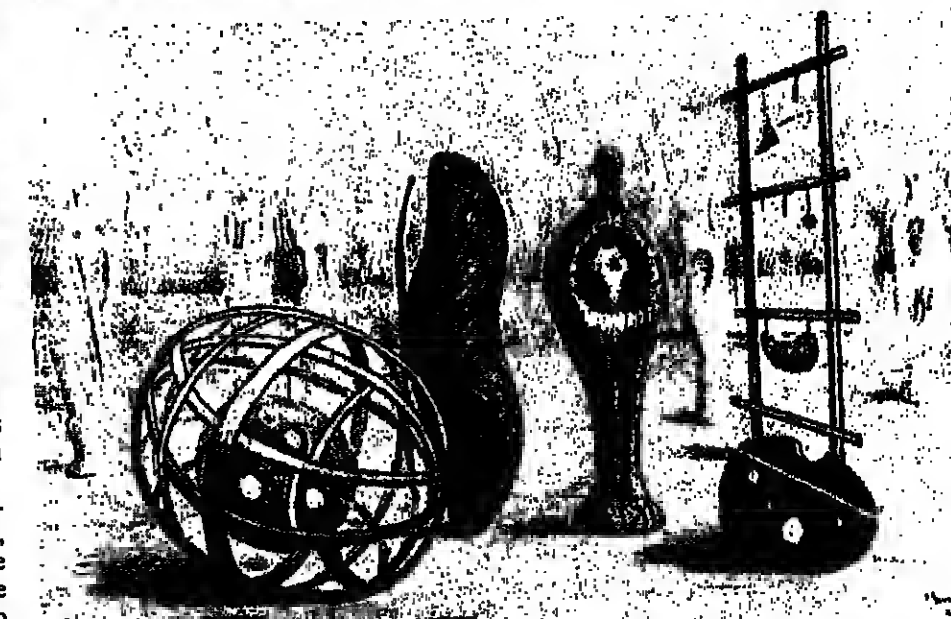
This does not mean, of course, that the scope of our meagre finite mind equals that of God, but rather that, although ranging over fewer subjects, it is capable of the same qualitative perfection. In the two chief architects of the seventeenth-century philosophical revolution, Galileo and Descartes, such an underlying belief does indeed seem to be powerfully at work. Thus we find Galileo observing that "with regard to those few truths which the human mind does understand [notably those of mathematics] its knowledge equals the divine in objective certainty"; while in Descartes there seems to be a deep commitment to the notion that one who perceives clearly and distinctly enjoys the kind of cognition that is as perfect as it could be (though for reasons it would take too long to evaluate here, Craig in fact prefers to see the will rather than the intellect as the focal point for the divine image doctrine in Descartes). Different facets of the same pervasive picture of the nature of the human mind are shown to underlie both Leibnizian metaphysics and Berkeleyan epistemology; in Leibniz, the human mind, that self-contained mirror of ultimate reality, is explicitly stated to differ from the creator "only as lesser from greater, as finite from infinite"; while in Berkeley the direct relation between the mind and its objects of perception is supposed to be parallel to that which obtains in the case of God: "Only when we come to Hume is the predominance of the divine image doctrine seriously challenged; and in what is the book's most powerfully argued and authoritative chapter Craig shows what a perspicuous and coherent reading of Hume we get if we see both the philosophical questions he raised, and the answers he gave, as essentially shaped by his loyalty to the prevailing metaphysics of the Image of God".

In the second half of the book Craig charts the gradual recession of the Image of God doctrine and its replacement by a still dominating world-picture which he calls the "Agency Theory" or the "Practice Ideal". No longer a quasi-divine spectator of reality, man becomes a being that actively creates, or shapes, his world. In English is invoked as the 1700s

man for the practice ideal in its most explicit form: "whereas for Descartes we had been animals plus the faculty of reason, for Engels the crucial extra was being able to use a flint. . . . The subject of this picture is no onlooker, however insightful and approving, but a constructive force." The contrast between Descartes and Engels does not seem a particularly happy one when one remembers Descartes's words in the *Discourse* about the need for a practical philosophy which will make us "comme maîtres et possesseurs de la nature". Yet the Agency Theory as conceived of by Craig is not simply a matter of seeing man as more actively involved with his environment, but has a deeper metaphysical dimension: the environment comes to be seen as something we not merely encounter but create:

"the realities which we meet with are the works of man". Or again: "As a participant [in the making of reality] man is autonomous, his creations subject to no controls or standards other than those which he himself imposes; and with this thesis of man's autonomy comes the corollary image of the surrounding, unresisting but also unresponsive void in which he has henceforth to make his way."

Under this very broad rubric, Craig is able to yoke together such apparently diverse thinkers as Kant (a "founder-member" of the Practice Ideal), William James and Nietzsche. Moving to more recent times, he sees the Agency Theory at work in the instrumentalist (as opposed to descriptivist) approaches to language taken by J. L. Austin and the later Wittgenstein, or again in the anti-realist tend-



"Sculptural Objects", a five-colour lithograph on wove paper by Henry Moore, signed and dated 1949; offered for sale in the recent exhibition of Modern British Prints 1914-1960 at the New York Print Fair, with ninety-four other prints by artists including Paul Nash, Edward Wadsworth, David Jones, Sybil Andrews, Victor Pasmore, Cecil Richards and Michael Rutherford. A selection of the works will be on view at the Redfern Gallery, 20 Cork Street, London W1, from November 4.

The way to awareness

D. P. Henry

JOHN POINSOT
Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinsett
Edited, arranged and translated by John N. Deely
607pp. University of California Press. £59.50.
0520042522

The meaning of "meaning" is not, after all, an exclusively contemporary philosophical concern. Following from Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, a tradition of enquiry extended itself in all sorts of forms throughout the medieval Latin West, with the distinction between "meaning" (*significatio*) and "standing-for" (*suppositio*) becoming familiar to the point of banality. The present work calls attention most forcefully to a seventeenth-century inheritor of that tradition who, looking back to the thirteenth-century Thomas Aquinas, deliberately endows the theory of signs with the specialized status which it deserves.

The result is impressive, and merits the generously funded piece of book-making in which it is here magnificently enshrined. The hundreds of bilingual, two-columned, large-format pages, the extensive notes, plans, tables (one of which is a yard-long pull-out), the topical and other indexes, as well as the physical make-up of the huge end-hand, some (yet reasonably priced) volume, all serve to heighten the almost feverishly enthusiastic atmosphere surrounding the whole presentation.

For it turns out that this book is not solely a tribute to the doctrine of friar John of St Thomas (John Poinsett's religious and literary title). Attention has recently been recalled by Thomas A. Sebeok and his associates, among whom is John N. Deely, the editor of Poinsett's *Tractatus de Signis*, to the vital philosophical importance of the theory of signs (that is, the "semiotic") in the work of C. S. Lewis, with John Locke and G. E. Hughes as its

most prominent modern continuators. No one could possibly disagree with this thesis, to which the shoals of medieval logical writings on *significatio* bear added witness. However, the present revival of semiotic, as the very lengthy appendices here make clear, further justifies itself by claiming to overcome false dichotomies generated by modern philosophy from Descartes onwards. Thus the controversy between "realism" and "idealism" is said to be transcended by Poinsett and semiotic, which at the same time makes possible an "escape from the basic conditions of subjectivity as something closed upon itself". The present work will also, it is claimed, "open up a new perspective" on the later stages of medieval thought.

All this sounds a most exhilarating programme, and the supremely professional character of Poinsett's extensive text, along with the dazzling scope revealed by the huge synoptic table of the work of which that text is, comparatively speaking, a mere extract, are, one feels, immensely superior to the rather chatty tone of his contemporary Descartes - a tone symptomatic of philosophy's decline towards the drawing-rooms of "well-bred company and polite conversation" favoured by Locke. But prospective readers must be warned that even with the sometimes rather questionable help of the parallel translation, the core of this book is very heavy going for those not thoroughly versed in medieval technical vocabulary and modes of expression, preferably (or even imperatively) in their Latin versions. The editor cannot be wholly serious when, having obligingly reproduced and translated Poinsett's complex prologue on how dialectical disputation is to be conducted, he adds a note allocating the task of moderator in such exercise (exemplified in the hundreds of succeeding pages) to the hapless reader of *De Signis*.

That reader is apparently supposed to digest and use this immensely dense mass of material as an introduction to the present-day "semiotic revolution" in the "understanding of the fundamental activity of mind, namely, awareness as such". We are threatened with inability to join in this revolution unless we have both

ency of much contemporary ethics. At this point, the reader may begin to be suspicious of the explanatory value of invoking an underlying metaphysics so capacious that it can net these very different fish. But though Craig's sweep is broad (and he readily admits that the Practice Ideal is a "diffuse phenomenon"), none's quibbles about his enterprise are allayed, in many if not all cases, by the care and clarity with which he documents the textual evidence for each of his chosen subjects.

One of the fruits of Craig's approach is that it underlines the extent to which an appreciation of cultural and historical context is a vital prerequisite for the proper evaluation of philosophical arguments. This is a truth which has begun to surface with increasing frequency in recent philosophical work; but Craig takes it further by showing how it solves a long-standing puzzle in the history of philosophy - the frequency with which philosophers of unquestionable genius seem to be satisfied with what appear to be patently feeble or glaringly fallacious arguments. Craig demonstrates (Berkeley and Hegel are two examples he uses to good effect here) how the emotional pull of an underlying metaphysics, often deeply entrenched at a pre-rational level, may operate like a set of concealed premisses "stabilizing an argument that for another, differently principled, towers at the gentlest push". If the acceptance of a *Weltbild* is as much a matter of the heart as the head, it follows that in order to understand a philosophical position, we need to look beyond "Philosophy", canonically defined. Thus in discussing the Romantic period (which he sees as a kind of transitional phase bridging the two eras of the Mind of God and the Works of Man), Craig argues that its underlying metaphysics is best appreciated through works that belong squarely to literature: to understand Hegel we need first to read Goethe and Schiller and Hölderlin. The conception of philosophical study implied here is one which the current rigidities of academic specialization do not readily facilitate; but it is none the less attractive for that.

understood and adopted Poinsett's position on "the reality in nature of mind-independent relations as such". This conveys nothing unless we know the presupposed functional and categorical-grammatical apparatus in terms of which this "reality" is taken to be expressed. Also it is difficult to see the ultimate argument in favour of adopting this position, unless it lies in Deely's reiterated allusions to "the classical medieval thesis, *ens et verum convertuntur*" ("being and the true are convertible"). Although I believe that contemporary logical grammar enables one at least to make sense of this thesis of convertibility, my own acquaintance with the relevant medieval literature scarcely encourages me to suppose that the thesis can do the job required of it by Deely. In fact neither the threats, nor Poinsett's text, nor the commentary, seem to justify over-hasty adherence to a revolution which is based on what, for all we know, could be a questionable and as yet unstated interpretation of some "classical medieval thesis".

The translation provided is admittedly replete with poraphores, repeatedly justified by the presentation of the original Latin text. This almost amounts to an admission that the English version is somewhat slanted in the direction of the present-day version of the semiotic revolution, as indeed turns out to be the case. Certainly the translations of key terms are often quite inappropriate. For example "physical beings" will not do for *entia realia* in this context (for instance, page 51), since theological entities are for Poinsett non-physical (indeed meta-physical) but nevertheless real. The extensive and often useful "Index Rerum" lists ten mistranslations of *vox* as "voice", as in the ludicrous case of "Non-significative voices are not terms". That "utterance" is the appropriate translation is clear from the immediate context and from the position of *vox* in the whole medieval logical tradition.

But a final evaluation of this volume scarcely depends on joining the semiotic revolution. As a reminder of the superb but still relatively unmapped lost world of medieval philosophy it is itself a most worthy object of awareness.

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Pride of place

Snrh Tyacke

H. A. M. VANDER HEIJDEN
The Oldest Maps of the Netherlands: An illustrated and annotated cartobibliography of sixteenth century maps of the XVII Provinces 230pp. Utrecht: H and S. H195.
90m/94.124.1
ERAN LAOR
Maps of the Holy Land: Cartobibliography of printed maps, 1475-1900
201pp. New York: Liss / Amsterdam: Meridian. 100190.
08451 1708 X

The catalogue *The Oldest Maps of the Netherlands* is a useful if sometimes curious publication. Part of a series of studies of the history of cartography and scientific instruments edited by Peter van der Krogt, of the Geographical Institute at Utrecht University, it describes fifty maps of the Seventeen Provinces between 1520 and 1599: until broken up in 1648, they covered roughly the geographical area now called The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. The maps reflect some of the preoccupations of those war-torn years and the sense of national pride in the Provinces' economic and cultural strength. The English text has been translated from Dutch and is occasionally oddly phrased, but not normally enough to cause ambiguity.

Of note are H. A. M. van der Heijden's discoveries of a number of new states of some of the maps, and in particular an example of the earliest printed map of the XVII Provinces engraved by Hieronymus Cock at Antwerp in 1557. This was found in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, in 1980, still in process of conservation after the 1966 floods. A single sheet at the Newberry Library, Chicago, has now also been identified as part of the Cock map. The map was engraved and printed, as the Latin legend says - commercial considerations apart - "amre erga patriam".

The reasons for publishing "national" maps in western Europe in the mid-sixteenth century are no doubt manifold and have been the subject of recent speculative articles. England, France and Austria, as well as The Netherlands, all began State-backed surveys, which were then, either directly or indirectly, converted into printed maps by commercial publishers. Charles V, for example, ordered Jacob van Deventer to map the XVII Provinces between 1535 and 1547, and at least one manuscript copy of a general map is known to have been made by him, recorded at Antwerp c1551. It is not clear that a printed version of that map was actually made, as is claimed by van der Heijden in this work. In England and in France, the 1560s and 70s saw similar developments.

The Antwerp and Cologne publishers of these maps often give some clue, in their legends to the readers, as to the perceived appeal such maps would have to prospective buyers. An effusive example is Henricus Pirrius's map of 1568, for which its author wrote: "you will also see Gielre known for its

manifold wars and noble Zutphen; pitiable Zealand swept by the sea...". Ten years later, Frunz Hogenberg stressed the XVII Provinces' identity as "Germania Inferior" subjected to the power of Philip II of Spain, and remarked upon its wealth of towns (208 of them), "surrounded by ramparts, walls and moats".

Perhaps the most popular, and indeed polemical, of all the maps of this region is the "Leo Belgicus", a representation of the Provinces as a warlike lion, introduced to the public in 1583 by Michael von Aitzing; this image continued well into the seventeenth century. "We introduce to you, dear reader, the Leo Belgicus... From this lion I hope you will understand what happened in The Netherlands, how often, when not in what places and towns, in peace - and in wartime especially during the last twenty-four years, that is, from 1559 until the present year of 1583." Yet another unique map engraved by Joannes Handius, while exiled in London in 1590, shows "Belgica" praying, "Post tenebras spero lucem."

The catalogue is well presented, according

to international standards - ISBD(CM) - and each map is clearly illustrated in black-and-white close to its description, which is a simple but effective way of cataloguing maps successfully.

Similarly, Eran Laor has compiled, in *Maps of the Holy Land*, a catalogue of his own collection, which he presented to the Jewish National and University Library. The catalogue and its engaging introduction, recalling Laor's adventures as a map collector travelling across Europe from 1947 to about 1973, describes both commonly found maps and some very unusual ones of Palestine. In particular those published in Hebrew from the nineteenth century onwards are unusual. Of special English interest is a unique four-sheet map of Canaan by John Speed, dedicated to William Cotton, Bishop of Exeter, in 1595. Maps of the Holy Land, like this one, enjoyed a popularity among English and Continental map buyers from the end of the sixteenth century onwards.

The catalogue is well illustrated and has obvious appeal for map collectors.

The earliest projections

Jeffrey C. Stone

J. B. HARLEY and DAVID WOODWARD (Editors)
The History of Cartography
Volume One: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean
599pp. University of Chicago Press. £78.95.
0226316335

The History of Cartography seeks to move beyond the study of old maps as antiquarian artefacts, towards an understanding of them, not just as the product of their social, cultural and technological circumstances, but as documents which have played an influential role in

much human endeavour. It looks to inject new purpose into cartographic history and to lead it towards intellectual respectability and autonomy within the social sciences. It has been awaited with interest by professional scholars and also by the well-informed map-collecting fraternity - which is now large enough to support its own prestigious quarterly journal, *The Map Collector*, and is accustomed to paying large sums occasionally for the necessary literature.

The first chapter sets out the objectives of the projected six volumes, and includes a conceptual overview by J. B. Harley, one of the work's two editors, of the kind for which he is becoming noted. In this essay, he postulates a three-phase evolution of cartographic historiography and maintains that it is only since the 1930s that the subject has attained its own scholarly identity. An alternative view might be that it remains an academic Cinderella to this day, at the periphery of several disciplines, and that the completion of this project affords the best prospect for its recognition as a separate and significant subject.

In Part One of *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, the origins are taken back to the Upper Palaeolithic in Europe, rather than the customary starting-point in Babylonian times. Catherine Delano Smith presents a highly original and exhaustive consideration of the evidence for prehistoric cartography in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, including a remarkable enumeration of sites and artefacts. Part Two considers the cartography of Ancient Europe and the Mediterranean, beginning with an explanation for the extreme shortage of surviving originals or copies. Consideration of first efforts in scale and orientation forms a significant part of A. R. Millard's account of Babylonian cartographic understanding, while (contrary to what is often suggested) the modesty of the Egyptian contribution is made apparent by A. F. Shore.

The cartography of archaic, classical and Hellenistic Greece and the less familiar developments of the Greece of early Roman times are described by Germaine Aujac, with appropriate attention to the great conceptual, astronomical and geodetic advances of the period. In dealing with the culmination of Greek geographical science in Claudius Ptolemy, O. A. W. Dilke is unable to resolve the dispute as to whether Ptolemy's text was in his lifetime accompanied by maps, and he shows why uncertainty remains. He sets out with similar clarity the debate over the erroneous orientation of north Britain according to Ptolemy, while his knowledge of the period incidentally permits him to castigate C. H. Haggard for the misuse of cartographic evidence in *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings* (1979). In making his case for the existence of an "advanced civilization in the ice age", Dilke goes on to consider use of Roman maps in the organization of roads. In land survey, he deals

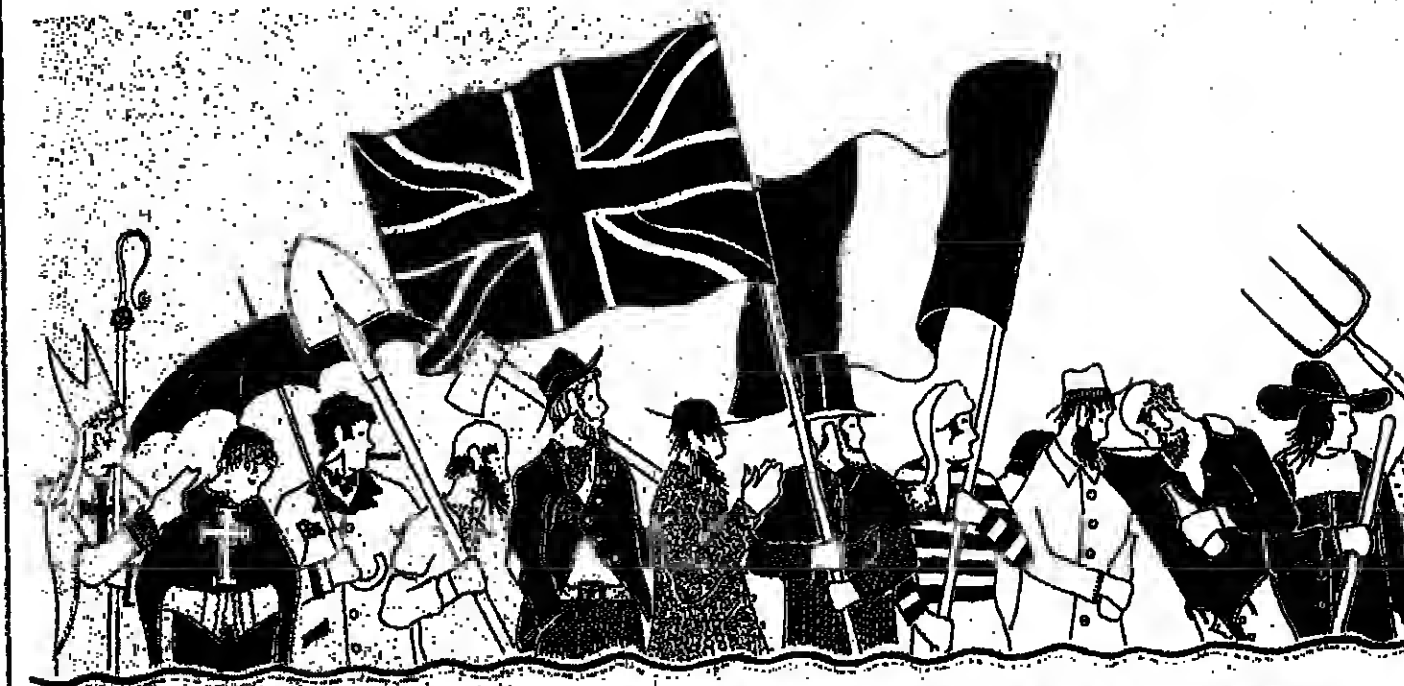
with large-scale mapping in the early Roman Empire at same length and goes on to challenge the popular conception of the decline of cartography in the late Empire, before tackling the paradox of the absence of such knowledge in the Byzantine State.

Relatively little work has been done on cartography in medieval Europe, but in turning to the specialized study of medieval *mappeamundi*, the other editor, David Woodward, nevertheless has a considerable body of literature to review. The addition of much original work results in one of the most significant contributions to the volume, in which the larger objectives of the history as a whole are put into practice in an exemplary manner. The *mappeamundi* are placed in their social and technological context, and in consequence require to be reassessed. It seems, for example, that the spherical shape of the earth was appreciated earlier than is generally credited, or indeed would seem to be the case from an examination of the maps in isolation.

In his outstanding study of portolan charts from the late thirteenth century to 1500, Tony Campbell shows firm judgment on the controversial question of the date of their origins, reviews the manner of their construction and then presents extensive original findings on the dates and interrelationships between the charts, based on rigorous and extensive comparison of their place-names. This third section, on Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean, concludes with an account of local and regional cartography by P. D. A. Harvey, in which the increase in the use of maps in the first half of the sixteenth century is very evident.

A major feature of the volume is the three modes of access to bibliographical information: through footnotes, chapter bibliographies and a forty-six-page bibliographical index, which ensures that it will remain a standard work of reference for a long time. Black-and-white illustration is extensively and effectively deployed within the text, sometimes as relevant details and sometimes of maps in their entirety, many of them unfamiliar. The chapters on Babylonian maps and on *mappeamundi* are particularly informatively illustrated. Forty colour plates, however, are not integrated into the text, and in some instances they fail to resolve the dilemma of many books on early maps: the reproduction of large sheets in a small format necessitates reduction beyond legibility and hence provides only an outline impression of the original, which can be frustrating for the reader.

Preliminary planning for *The History of Cartography* began in 1975, and the project has already outlived three of its editorial advisers. Volume One was due to go to press in 1982, but the delay is amply vindicated by the quality of the end-product. It seems almost unreasonable to suppose that the editorial burden required by a further five volumes of similar quality can be sustained by any two editors, even when they have the prowess of Professors Harley and Woodward.



The Cheyenne prophet's dream of future, as depicted by the award-winning artist Paul Goble in *Death of the Iron Horse*, his story of the coming of the railway - "the angel it breathes out smoke and has the voice of thunder" - and how the braves attacked the engine in defence of their tribe (Bradbury/Macmillan. £6.95. 002 71830 6).

Enemies within

Peter Blake

ZIBBY ONEAL
The Language of Goldfish
173pp. Gollancz. £7.95.
0755041266
VIRGINIA HAMILTON
The Planet of Junior Brown
210pp. Gollancz. £7.95.
057540466

The Planet of Junior Brown (1971) and *The Language of Goldfish* (1980), both now available in Britain for the first time, evince some typical concerns of American writers for children. These are inherently therapeutic works designed to help children come to terms with the world, and to accommodate their own idiosyncrasies and those of their peers.

In *The Language of Goldfish*, Carrie, the thirteen-year-old daughter of a suburban Chicago doctor, cannot face puberty. She suffers a nervous breakdown and attempts suicide as a result of her fear of anything connected with sex. Slowly, through daily psychotherapy and her own paintings and drawings she is able to face the inevitable loss of childhood innocence. In order to avoid stigmatizing unexpected behaviour, Zibby Oneal sets out to redefine the borders of expected behaviour. What was noted extraordinary is subsumed under the ordinary; what was abnormal becomes a subset of the normal. As a result common and understandable neuroses seem to be symptoms demanding psychiatric treatment. Carrie's reasonable unease at having to buy a bra or go to the school dances seems to lead directly to the psychiatrist's couch. At times the author's fictional obsession with psychoanalysis suggests a conspiracy of therapists, with the accompanying belief that therapy leads to a cure, that the slow process of self-revelation leads to an identifiable trauma, recognition of which causes all symptoms to dissolve. "I know why I got sick", Carrie tells Dr Ross triumphantly. "This morning during English class I suddenly understood... for some people growing up is especially hard." This is a facile conclusion to an otherwise well-controlled book.

Carrie's cure comes partly from her sessions with Dr Ross but predominantly through her drawing and painting. Here too a common theme in children's books shows itself - disturbance is a side-effect of extraordinary talent. This is hard on the disturbed yet unattested. The black Upper West Side New York setting of Virginia Hamilton's *Planet of Junior Brown* is distant from Oneal's wealthy Chicago suburbs, but the central character is an extremely talented disturbed teenager, Junior Brown. Junior and Buddy are two cronies who spend their days in the basement of the school in the company of Mr Pool, who is now the school janitor but who was formerly a mathematician and astronomer. He gives the

boys an education and provides the emotional security that Junior, with his sick, unloving mother, and Buddy, a sort of honest Artful Dodger who lives on the streets of New York and looks after young runaways, could not elsewhere find.

After his mother discovers some of his paintings and after a confrontation with his equally talented and more disturbed piano teacher, Junior runs away from home and has a nervous breakdown. Virginia Hamilton, however, has no place for psychiatrists, presumably because psychotherapists have no place for poor black schoolboys. Buddy argues the case with Mr Pool: "They'll hit an awfat he is... Buddy cried, 'they'll say that's it, we got to get him skinny... They'll see how black he is... and they'll say that's the problem, we got to get to the white inside.'" The alternative is to take

him into their own care, and Buddy does this, winning the abuse Junior dreads into his derelict basement world of last boys, where he can be protected from his own delusions and the outside world. The cure is at hand.

There is something much more reassuring in Hamilton's approach. Whereas Oneal's misadventure is sent to the psychiatrist, Hamilton's are offered care and understanding. Dependence on psychiatry is incidentally revealed as the symptom of an unloving society. Buddy is the traditional story-book figure, who finds adventure and enemies in the world outside. Carrie and Junior exemplify the new heroine and hero whose adventures are within. They embody the challenge for the modern fictional subjects: the enemy is themselves. And as in traditional adventure fiction, the enemy is vanquished.

Uncertain futures

Anthony Horowitz

ANN HALAM
The Daymaker
173pp. Orchard. £7.50.
1852131019
PAULA DANZIGER
This Place Has No Atmosphere
154pp. Heinemann. £6.95.
0434934151

Fantasy and science fiction are often twinned together as genres, but in fact they are poles apart. Science fiction prepares us for the future. Fantasy escapes from it. The world of Ann Halam's *The Daymaker* may well be our own after the nuclear holocaust, but if so it is far enough removed for us not to need to worry. The flavour is more medieval than futuristic, with village-based communities firmly tied to the seasons and the harvest, living in fear of raiding parties and rarely travelling. In this world, of course, magic is a dominant force. We know where we are from the moment Uncle Lol turns an apple into a bird. Anything can happen now. We wait to be enchanted.

But *The Daymaker* fails to enchant. It is written beautifully, perhaps too beautifully. As the images pile up - fleeces like autumn leaves, sunlight like a swarm of bees - the actual story-line, bewildering from the start, actually becomes ponderous. This, at its simplest, concerns a young girl called Zanne, whose magical abilities nearly destroy her home and village. She is sent to an academy of magic and from there departs on a quest to discover the mysterious Daymaker, source and symbol of the dangerous old magic. In itself, this is a compelling and time-honoured theme. The fact that the old magic seems to be technology-based and must perforce destroy the new, natural magic, should heighten the tension of

Zanne's journey. There are plenty of good ideas in *The Daymaker* but any tension becomes lost in a maze of reference points: Inland, Outland, Fatland, Inceptors, Continuers, Makers, Holders, the half moon and the twelfth night of Trime, etc. Names can have a distancing effect. Zanne of Garth and Dimen of Mosden, taught by Tecov Elima, meet Sear of Clappers. It is very hard to care about people who sound like anagrams. And when all this is combined with a purposefully abstruse philosophy and a highly stylized way of writing ("If the Makers operate, Inland is not. Magic dissolves...") the result is unsatisfying and confused.

We are on safer ground with Paula Danziger's *This Place Has No Atmosphere*, the place in question being the world of our own future, AD 2057, where Aurora finds herself the unwilling companion of her parents, who are flying out to become pioneers on the moon. Her father is something big in dentistry, which might be problem enough, but Aurora's real trouble is her own unyielding personality which has to be knocked into shape by her new experiences. This is achieved, not by encounters with alien life-forms or other lunar perils, but by the mounting of a production of *Our Town* and the discovery of true love.

Danziger's huge popularity in America depends less on the atmosphere of her books than on her inerring ability to home in on the teenage mind. Written in the first person, the book uses diary extracts, "fact sheets" and handwritten letters to bring Aurora vividly to life and any serious considerations about the future have to take second place. In fact this future holds few surprises, with its moving sidewalks, weird fashions, holograms and robot teachers. But it is enlivened by some well-targeted jokes, while the descriptions of life on the moon seem well-researched and certainly ring true.

A good anger

Doug Anderson

MARGARET MAHY
Memory
234pp. Dent. £7.95.
0146106269

All the traditional ways in which a young man can authenticate himself have become suspect: killing a lion is a little too much like a mugging, and dying for heroic abstractions is for the likes of Oliver North. And yet in Margaret Mahy's *Memory*, a troubled youth arrives, through an unexpected opportunity to care, at his soft and palpable human centre.

There is a fight and an exhibition of machismo at the climax of the story, but these serve a purpose other than the usual one of proving power: the blows inflicted on Jonny Dart serve to jar his memory, after which there is a flooding forth of vision, and a coming together of a fragmented self. The act of genuine heroism which causes the fight is relatively unimportant compared to the insights it brings.

The New Zealand novelist and Carnegie Medal winner Margaret Mahy does not think this story too substantial for her teenage audience. Never condescending to her readers, she assumes that teenagers are capable of being moved, and of responding to wit and poetry. When Jonny snys in a young woman he wants to seduce, "You never know what that sort of thing will lead to" (meaning a kiss), she replies, coolly, "It doesn't have to lead anywhere. It can be the place you arrive at."

Jonny Dart, traumatized by the accidental death of his sister and the fear that he in some way caused it, thwarted by parents who make it clear that they think the wrong child died, dances his way through life surrounded by the nimbus of sound from his Walkman, which plays lyrics like, "Feet gone wandering. Head's no guide, burn the world with the fire inside." Jonny is a failed, tap dancer - not for lack of talent but for lack of self-esteem. His father having blacked his eye at the story's outset, he runs away from home and encounters Sophie, an old woman with Alzheimer's disease who doesn't know who or where she is half the time, is in danger of burning her house down, and wears a tee-cosy she thinks is a hat. She fits Jonny into the fragmented patterns of her memory, assumes he's a long-lost cousin, and invites him in. Jonny, having nowhere else to go, moves in with her. Thus begins a convergence of two injured memories: his blocked by grief and guilt, hers scattered by disease.

Mahy, in her respect for young adults and her belief that there is nothing they cannot adapt to, pulls no punches: there are scenes of Jonny waking up to find the old woman standing filthy and naked over his bed, speaking to him as if he were someone else. There are descriptions of her house, infested by cats and smells and rotting food. Sophie is at the mercy of thugs, posing as landlords, who are systematically robbing her. Jonny is given a dose of reality in images he has never before encountered, and through these images he discovers the unexpected about himself: that he is kind.

This realization is such a shock that he is galvanized by it. And his process of coming to an understanding of the loneliness and bitterness of old age, his recovery of a potent self below the slick masks he has fashioned to survive, make this an original rite of passage story, in which tenderness, rather than the traditional panoply of maleness, is the reward.

Memory also has a well-defined political context. It is full of allusions to issues in contemporary New Zealand politics: Manri rights, the social complexities of a racially mixed nation, the disintegration of a traditional culture in the face of rampant commercialism (references that non-New Zealanders are unlikely to understand are carefully footnoted). Above all, Mahy raises the idea that anger at injustice is a good thing, something to be nurtured and focused.

Mahy is a poet of sorts, but she is also, a shrewd psychologist. She understands the creativity of memory, how it can shape traumas into crippling myths over time, and how emotional extremes and shocks are sometimes required to waken one from them. Her message is clear: the human self one is born as is the right one.



Hands up!

Who knows what the Soviet people are really like? This Friday in *The Times* Conor Cruise O'Brien (left) analyses the different histories and customs of the Russian empire

...and regularly in *The Times*, Philip Howard (right) on words, Bernard Levin on the way we live now, Irving Wardle at the theatre, Frances Gibb on the law, John Clare on education, Jane MacQuitty on wine, Peter Ackroyd on books, Barbara Amiel's viewpoint, the humour of Mel Calman, Jonathan Meades on eating out, the unique *Times* crossword...and much more

THE TIMES
A lion among paper tigers 25p

TLS LISTINGS

A comprehensive weekly selection
of new and forthcoming books received by the TLS

Anthropology

Brody, Hugh Living Arctic: Hunters of the Canadian North. Faber, 254pp., illus. £4.95 (paperback). 0 571 15066 9. 24/10/87.
Parkin, David, and David Nyamwaya, editors Transformations of African Marriage (International African Seminars). Manchester UP, 350pp., £15. 0 7190 2325 4. 23/10/87.
Warlaku lingu Artists Yuendumu Doors: Kariwari Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, GPO Box 553, Canberra, ACT 2601, 143pp., illus. Aus\$22.95 (paperback). 0 85375 179 7. 7/87.

Art

Anton, F. Ancient Peruvian Textiles. Thames and Hudson, 270pp., plates. £24. 0 500 01402 7. 24/10/87.
Bernard, Bruce Introduction by Peter Levi The Queen of Heaven: A selection of paintings of the Virgin Mary from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Macdonald Orbis, 248pp., plates. £10. 0 350 15041 5. 22/10/87.
Crewe, Sarah Stained Glass in England 1180-1540. HMSO, 187pp., plates. £9.95 (paperback). 0 11 300011 4. 27/10/87.
Degas, Edgar; Richard Kendall, editor Degas by Himself: Drawings, prints, paintings, writings. Macdonald Orbis, 329pp., plates. £10. 0 350 15042 5. 22/10/87.
Homer, Peter The New Furniture: Trends and traditions. Thames and Hudson, 209pp., illus. £10. 0 500 23492 2. 24/10/87.
Mikhail, Aikati, editor Introduction and texts by Elena Chernykh; translated by Catherine Cooke Soviet Commercial Design of the Twenties. Thames and Hudson, 144pp., illus. £22.50. 0 500 23104 X. 20/87.
Norman, Geraldine Hiedemeyer Painting. Thames and Hudson, 192pp., illus. £15. 0 500 23493 0. 19/10/87.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Tom Allen's novel for young people, *Winter Lane*, appeared last year.
Stephen E. Ambrose is Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at the University of New Orleans. He is the author of a two-volume biography of Eisenhower, 1984, and of *Murder: The education of a politician, 1914-1963*, published earlier this year.
Harold Beaver is Professor of American Literature at the University of Amsterdam. His collection of essays *The Great American Manoeuvre* was published in 1985, and his study of *Huckleberry Finn* earlier this year.
Bruce Boucher is a lecturer in the History of Art at University College London.
Graham Bradshaw is a lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews. His book *Shakespeare's Aesthetics* is reviewed on page 1198.
Joseph Brodsky has just been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.
John Clute's novel, *The Dismembering Party*, was published in 1977.
Linda Colley is an Associate Professor of History at Yale University. Her *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60* appeared in 1982.
W. R. Connor is Professor of Classics and Chairman of the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University. His book *Thucydides*, 1984, has just been reissued in paperback.
John Cottingham is a member of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences at the University of Reading. His books include *Descartes*, 1976, and *The Rationalists*, which will be published next year.
Patricia Craig's biography of Elizabeth Bowen in the Penguin Lives of Modern Women series was published last year.
J. Mordaunt Crook is Professor of Architectural History at the University of London. His *The Dilemma of Style: An historical study from the Picturesque to the Post-modern* will be published shortly.
Winton Dean is the author of *The New Grove Handel*, 1982. His most recent publication (with John Merrill Knapp) is *Handel's Operas, 1704-1726*, to be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.
John Derry is Reader in Modern History at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His books include *English Politics and the American Revolution*, 1976.
Rosemary Dimagie's *Annie Besant* appeared last year.
Sena French is Deputy Editor of *New Society*.
D. P. Hiley's books include *Mitral Logic and Metaphysics: A modern introduction*, 1972.
Anne Ilse is a former *Eleve Supérieure* of the École Normale Supérieure, and now teaches at Wellesley College, Massachusetts.
Patrick Higonnet is Professor of History at Harvard University. He was this year Directeur d'étude associé at the École Pratique des Hautes Études.
Christopher Isherwood is the Washington columnist of the *Nation*. His book *The Elgin Marbles: Should they be returned to Greece?* was published earlier this year.
Mick Juba's pamphlet of poems *The Zoological Bath and Other Adventures* was published in 1982.
Gabriel Jowles's collection of stories *In the Fertile Land* will be published next month. His most recent novel, *Culture-Jour*, 1986, was shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize.
J. H. C. Leach is a Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford. He was editor of the *Investment Analyst* from 1974 to 1979.
Jane Lewis is a lecturer in Social Administration at the London School of Economics. Her books include *Women in England 1500-1914*, 1984.
William Maxwell was on the staff of the *New Yorker* from 1946 to 1976.
Janet McIntosh teaches at the Oriental Institute in Oxford.
Joy Martin's novel *The Patch Boys* appeared last year.
Simon Popper is a lecturer in Architecture at the University of Liverpool. He is co-author (with Nicholas Adams) of *Form and Function: A history of architecture and design in the twentieth century*, 1984.
Robert Pinder is Professor of Social Sciences at the London School of Economics. He is the author of *Social Theory and Social Policy*, 1971.
Simon Rae's poems appeared in *Faber's Poetry Introduction* 5, 1982.
Frederic Raphael's *Think of England* was published last year.
Peter Reading's *Essential Reading* and his new collection of poems, *Six*, were published last year.
James L. Rieu is Professor of Russian at the University of Oregon, and the author of *Democracy and the Healing Art*, 1985.
John Rosehill is the author of *The Open Inquiry in Italy from Cinquante Verdi: The role of the impresario*, 1984.
T. A. Siddipati's most recent publication is *The Road to Middle Earth*, 1982.
Jeffrey C. Stone is Senior Lecturer in Geography at the University of Aberdeen.
Frank Tashy's *Collected Stories* appeared in 1984.
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Rafael Tuckwell, Director of Special Collections at the British Library, was the editor of *English Ship-Making 1500-1850*, 1985.
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